

Secret Service - Old King Brady No 398

The Chinese Banker



SECRET SERVICE

OLD AND YOUNG KING BRADY, DETECTIVES.

1 Week — By Subscription \$2.50 per year. Entered as Second Class Matter at the New York Post-Office, March 1, 1899, by Frank Tousey.

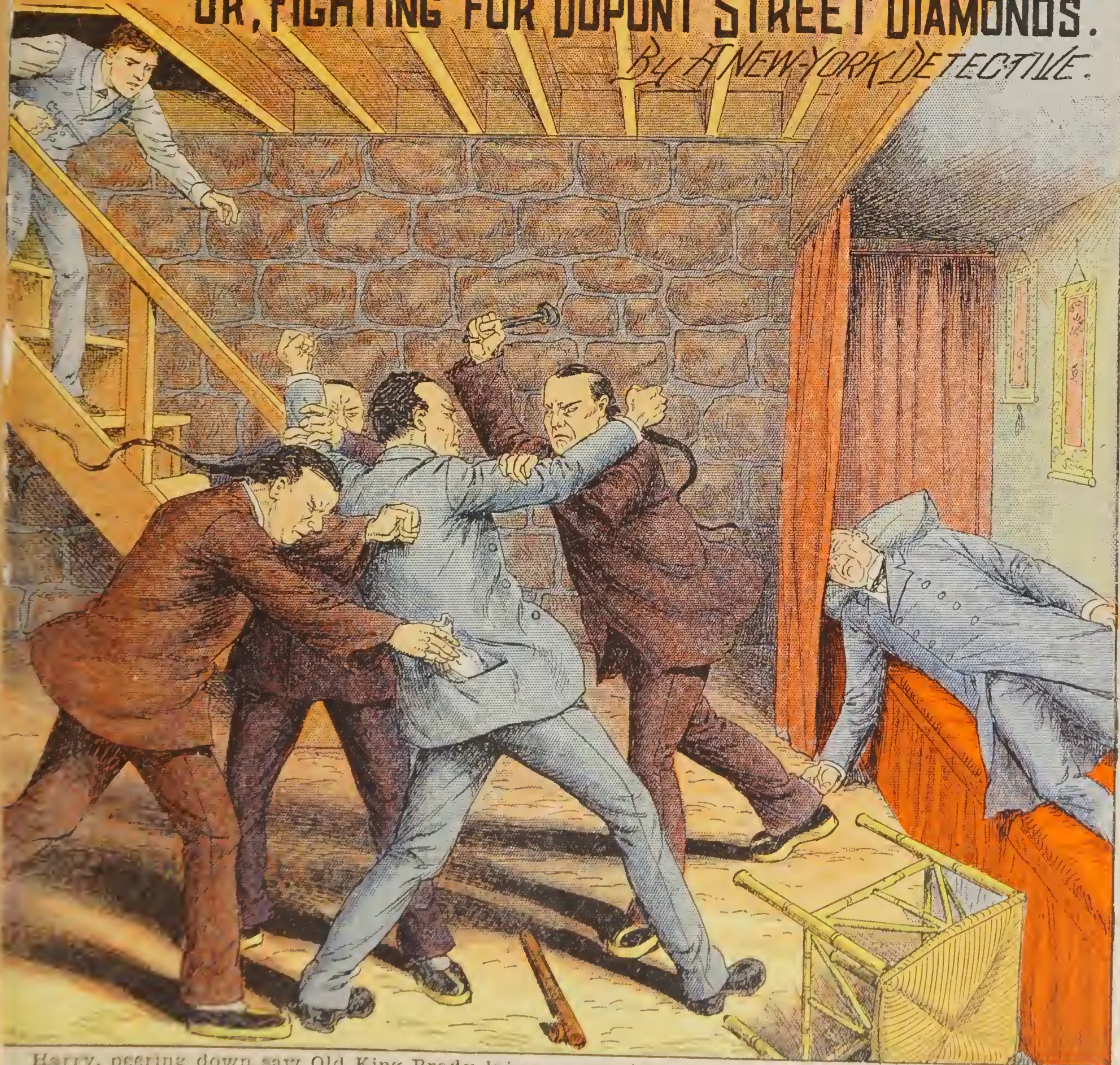
No. 398.

NEW YORK, SEPTEMBER 7, 1906.

Price 5 Cents.

THE BRADYS AND THE CHINESE BANKER; OR, FIGHTING FOR DUPONT STREET DIAMONDS.

By A NEW-YORK DETECTIVE.



Harry, peering down, saw Old King Brady lying unconscious in the bunk. It seemed that the old detective must be dead. There was a hot time in among the Chinks. In the struggle one drew the bag from the banker's pocket.



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NEW YORK, SEPTEMBER 7, 1906.

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CHAPTER I.

LEANDER O'REILLY AND HIS DIAMONDS.

The most widely known detectives in the United States at the present time are unquestionably the Bradys.

The firm consists of Old King Brady, long and widely known to the American public, and his pupil and partner, Young King Brady, whose reputation for skillful detective work is second only to that of his chief.

On a certain morning in the month of September these two remarkable men found themselves seated at the breakfast table in the old Lick House, San Francisco.

They had just completed an important case which had called them to California before the earthquake, and were now about to return to New York.

Breakfast was just about completed when the waiter handed Old King Brady a dinky little business card printed in the crude German text in use forty years ago.

"The gentleman wishes to see you, sir," he said.

The card read as follows:

LEANDER O'REILLY.

Banker.

No. — Kearney St.

San Francisco.

"Ask the gentleman to wait, Peter," the old detective said, passing the card over to his partner.

"Who the deuce is Leander O'Reilly?" inquired Young King Brady.

"He is, Harry, taken all in all, one of the most remarkable characters in San Francisco," the old detective replied.

"Then he must indeed be remarkable, for San Francisco full of remarkable characters, if ever a town was."

"Exactly so, and many of them remarkable only in our own estimation."

"You know O'Reilly?"

"Oh, yes; these many years. Handled a case for him once. That was before you were born."

"I should imagine you had seen him since, or he would surely remember you."

"Oh, yes. Several times. But people don't forget so long as you seem to imagine."

"I leave that to you to guess. He may have a case for me, but all I can tell."

This proved to be a correct surmise.

Leaving the breakfast table, the Bradys went out into

the hotel reading-room, where they found a little dried-up old man awaiting them.

Before quitting the breakfast table Old King Brady had explained the status of Leander O'Reilly in the Golden City to his partner.

The man was a 49er, and in the early days of Chinese emigration to California he had established a little bank and money changing office on Kearney street near Sacramento, which was very largely patronized by the Chinese.

This was before the days of the Chinese Six Companies, at a time when banks were uncertain, and there were no Chinese bankers and few Celestials who could speak English.

O'Reilly in his youth had lived in China, and had acquired a knowledge of the Cantonese language.

Being a strictly honest man, he gradually gained the confidence of the Chinese residents of San Francisco, and for many years did a large business among them, changing money, making loans, selling foreign exchange, etc., etc.

For this reason he came to be known as "Chinese" O'Reilly, and his services were often in demand as an interpreter and go-between by the business men of San Francisco.

All this had now changed, of course, for the California Chinese now have their own bankers.

But O'Reilly, having acquired a competence, continued business.

We may add as a finish to our sketch that the man is now dead.

Old King Brady shook hands with the banker, and introduced his partner.

"I'm so glad I caught you," said O'Reilly. "I saw in the paper that you were in town. I was afraid you would be starting back for New York."

"We are to go to-day," replied Old King Brady.

"You couldn't stop over now and take up a case for me, I suppose?"

"It is not impossible, O'Reilly."

"I should be mighty glad if you would, then. I am in a lot of trouble. I was just about to apply to the police, but I would far rather keep the matter quiet and leave it in the hands of the Bradys, so I would."

"Let's hear your case, and then I will decide," replied the old detective.

They seated themselves in one corner of the reading-

room, where they could look out upon busy Montgomery street.

Old King Brady produced cigars, and when they had lighted up the banker began as follows:

"You know me, and you know my way of doing business, Brady, so in spite of the way my place looks it will not surprise you when I state that I have been robbed of some \$200,000 worth of diamonds.

"It happened yesterday, somewhere between ten and three o'clock.

"You know that what little business I still do is mostly with Chinamen. In this case I received a call from my old friend, Lee Phat, of Dupont street, to buy him diamonds to that amount on the Amsterdam market, and import them to San Francisco.

"What Lee Phat, who is a Chinese banker, wanted of the diamonds I don't know, for you know how close these Chinks keep their business, but I daresay it was to smuggle them into China. This, however, is no business of mine.

"The diamonds arrived by express from New York day before yesterday, and were delivered to me yesterday morning at ten o'clock.

"I opened the papers and examined them. They were a fine lot of stones, and being something of an expert in diamonds myself, I am capable of judging.

"I then put the papers in my safe and notified Lee Phat by messenger. He had advanced the money all in one lump, and I had remitted the same to my agent in Amsterdam: there were duties and express charges for which I have not as yet been paid, which amount to quite a sum.

"Instead of coming right around after the stones, Lee Phat did not show up until three o'clock.

"I then went to my safe to get the diamonds, and to my horror found that the package was missing.

"Naturally Lee Phat was wild. He has known me for many years, and we have had many transactions in diamonds before. While he does not accuse me of making way with the diamonds, he is still very much worked up over the matter, and will surely sue me if something is not done within a very short time.

"That is the case, Mr. Brady, and you can see for yourself that it is one which demands quick work. To give it to local detectives is almost the same as saying that I shall never see the diamonds, for they will go blundering about: it will all get into the papers, and the thief will be on the wing before ever they get ready to begin."

Leander O'Reilly leaned back in his chair and took a fresh light for his cigar.

The little man was in a pitiable state of nervousness, and trembled all over as he looked up into the old detective's face.

"Well, that is a strange story," said Old King Brady. "I never knew you to make such a slip like that before."

"Niver! Niver!" cried the banker. "In the last forty

years I have handled several million dollars' worth of diamonds, and a lot for the Chinks, who do more business in them than you would ever suppose. Niver a stone was lost before. Will you take up the case?"

"Couldn't think of refusing you, O'Reilly."

"Good! Sure, you give me hope. What shall we do?"

"Let us go to your place. We will continue our talk there."

O'Reilly was up in an instant.

"Sure, if you can't get me out of this snap there's nobody who can," he said. "Of course, I can make good but it will go very hard on me. I don't do much business these days. The fact is, this is the only big transaction I have had in a year, and I was depending upon the commission to square up a lot of matters for which I would otherwise have had to draw on my investments."

O'Reilly now led the Bradys up on Kearney street to his little banking office.

It was a queer place.

The width of the little three-story building was only about fifteen feet.

A little box of a business office behind a heavy wire screen occupied the front.

In the rear was a stuffy private office containing a desk, a few chairs, and a huge safe.

There was another and smaller safe in front.

There were two doors to the private office, one leading from the passage-way in front of the railing, and the other from the space behind.

Two windows close together, and both heavily barred, overlooked a narrow court.

One glance was sufficient to show Young King Brady, who had never been in the place before, that it would be exceedingly difficult for anyone to effect an entrance to the private office in the daytime without being observed by someone.

An aged clerk stood at the desk behind the railing.

He looked up anxiously as they entered.

"It is Old King Brady, Murphy," said the banker. "Sure, you remember him?"

"Very well," replied Murphy. "An' it's a good job you got him."

"Has Lee Phat been in?"

"No, he hasn't, sir. Mr. Tom was in asking for you. He'll be back at elivin', he said."

The banker led the way into the private office, and closed both doors.

"There's the safe," he said, "and there is the compartment where I put the package of diamonds."

"How big was it?" demanded Old King Brady.

"About as big as your two hands."

"Enclosed how?"

"In that Dutch brown paper. It was the original wrapper."

"I know the kind. Now, sit down, O'Reilly, and let me question you a bit."

"Good," said the banker, "and we will have a smoke while we talk."

He produced cigars, dropped into his chair by the desk, and the questioning began.

"First," said Old King Brady, "how many times did you go to this office between ten and three?"

"Let me see. It was only once—do you count going to the front office?"

"Yes."

"Well, then, I couldn't tell you. I was only out of the office to my lunch, but of course I kept passing in and out between the two offices."

"Exactly. Did you lock the safe when you went to lunch?"

"No. I have absolute confidence in Murphy. He's been with me thirty years."

"In a case like this that counts for nothing. Now mark time on this. One chance for the diamonds to have been stolen."

"I will never believe it."

"One chance, I say. Now, who was in this office beside yourself during those hours? Think close. Let us have no mistake."

"Well, first, Murphy, many times."

"Yes."

"Next my nephew, Tom O'Reilly."

"His age?"

"Twenty-two."

"His business?"

"Sure, he has none; he can't keep a job, what with following up the horses and the prizefights he has no time for work."

"Was he alone in this room between ten and three?"

"Sure, my nephew is no thief, Mr. Brady, even if he does run a bit wild."

"Mark time! You want to find the diamonds?"

"Yes, yes!"

"Well?"

"Let me think. Yes, Tom was alone here. He came after money. I keep none in my big safe. I went through the front office and got him fifty dollars of Murphy."

"Two chances for the diamonds to have been stolen."

O'Reilly groaned.

"I see now how careless I was," he said.

"Who else?" demanded Old King Brady.

"Well, there were several persons in. Let me think. I don't remember leaving anyone else alone here; that is—er—no."

"That is—er—yes. Come, come, O'Reilly, you want to help me all you can, and you don't help by keeping things back."

"But—"

"There must be no buts if I am to take up the case."

The banker twisted in his chair.

"Sure, there are some things that a man can't tell," he growled.

"Suit yourself," replied Old King Brady.

"You'll throw up the case if I don't tell?"

"I shall have to."

"Oh, well then, out with it. The fact is, I am thinking of getting married again, and the lady was in here. I—I—"

"Ha, you showed her the diamonds, you old rascal!"

O'Reilly's yellow cheeks actually flushed.

"Brady!" he gasped, "I s'pose there's no fool like an old fool; but that's what I did."

"And you left her alone in here afterward?" demanded the detective, twisting the probe in the wound.

"I—I did. I went into the front office to get Murphy to cash a check for her."

"Number three!" said Old King Brady, dryly. "Any more?"

CHAPTER II.

GETTING READY TO BEGIN.

"No, there are no more," replied Leander O'Reilly, in answer to Old King Brady's question, as given at the end of the last chapter.

"I want to explain," he added, hastily. "This lady is above suspicion. I—er—I—"

"Everybody is above suspicion, O'Reilly," said Old King Brady, quietly. "Of course, when it comes to a lady to whom one is paying attention that is a very delicate matter."

"But there must be no exception," continued the banker. "I see that. You must know who the lady is and all about her. Be heavens, she might, now; say, she might have been tempted. It would be a bad job for me if I was to find that out after we were married, so it would."

"Exactly."

"I'll tell you all about it. She's Cassie Fine."

Old King Brady looked inquiringly at his partner.

"Chorus girl in the Golden Apple pantomime at the Baldwin," replied Harry. "They call them the Winadora Girls."

Old King Brady laughed.

"O'Reilly, what has come over you in your old age?" he demanded.

"Arrah, and I don't know at all at all," replied the banker. "I s'pose I'm an old fool. Tom says so. He ought to know."

"He was calling you down about this business when he called yesterday?"

"That's it."

"And you gave him fifty dollars to stop his mouth?"

"Yes, I did; and it's the first money I've given the young fool in six months."

"Do you really mean to marry Cassie Fine?"

"Sure, the day is set for this time two weeks; but if you can prove that she stole the diamonds——"

"Hold on, now. I have not accused her of stealing the diamonds. Never mind any more about her. We will drop Cassie Fine."

"Sure, it's meself that will drop her like a hot pertater if she swiped them gems."

"Enough. Now for the next."

"There is no next. I left no one else alone in this office; of that I am dead sure."

"It is necessary to be dead sure. Think over everything which happened that day."

The banker leaned his head on his hand.

It was easy to see that in his own mind he had already put the Winadora girl down as the thief.

Decidedly Banker O'Reilly had soured on Miss Cassie Fine.

But Old King Brady had jumped at no such conclusion.

His mind was just as open as when he began the talk.

"Come," he said, "can't you think of anyone else?"

"Well, there was—one, by gracious!" cried the banker. "But, sure, he doesn't count."

"Everybody counts. Who was it?"

"A Chink was in here selling me cigars. I remember now: I stepped to Murphy's desk to get the change of a bill. Sure, I wasn't gone a minute altogether, and the door stood open all the while."

"You know this Chinaman?"

"Only from seeing him in here."

"You don't know his name?"

"No."

"How long has he been coming in here?"

"I should say about a year."

"Describe him."

"Oh, it's hard to describe a Chink. He's neither old nor young. Let's see, now: he is poek-marked, for one thing."

"Very important. Think of something else."

But O'Reilly could think of nothing else which was of any importance.

Old King Brady questioned him further.

He took up each of the four persons who had been left alone in the office in turn.

The banker kept back nothing now.

He spoke freely of Murphy's habits, and was just as free about his nephew and his own acquaintance with Cassie Fine.

"Sure, I'll niver marry the gel now unless this mystery is cleared up," he declared.

And in this frame of mind the Bradys left him, after spending about an hour in picking up the threads of the case.

Hearing all this talk Young King Brady carefully at-

tended to his part of the work, which consisted in taking careful note of each point in the case.

Old King Brady now turned into Sacramento street, and walked up the hill toward Dupont street, a course which in a minute would bring them into the heart of Chinatown.

"What do you think of our case?" demanded Har- seeing that his partner was not inclined to talk.

"Mixed up," replied Old King Brady, "but plain enough for all that."

"How plain?"

"Plain because I am prepared to assert right now that one of these four certainly got the diamonds."

"I think so. No one could have got into that office any unusual way."

"Absolutely impossible. You saw the bars on the windows; such a thing as a secret entrance is not to be thought of. O'Reilly has been doing business there too long. Moreover, he owns the building. I am inclined to think that he built it. No; there is no deep mystery. One of those four persons is certainly the thief."

"There is one thing which rather surprised me, Governor."

"Well?"

"You never asked O'Reilly a solitary question about this Chinese banker."

"I know it."

"Why?"

"Because I propose to investigate him for myself. That is where I am heading for now."

"Oh, you know where he holds out, then?"

"Oh, yes; everybody knows Lee Phat. Here we are at Dupont street. His place of business is right down the block here."

"Before we tackle him, tell me, is he a man of large means?"

"Look him up in Dun or Bradstreet and you will be surprised to find him rated at over a million."

"It is wonderful how many of these rich Chinks there are getting to be millionaires."

"Yes; there are a lot of them in California, and it is only justice to say that when it comes to a Chinese business man you very seldom find a crook."

The Bradys had now reached Lee Phat's.

The office of the Chinese banker was even smaller than that of Leander O'Reilly.

No one unfamiliar with the ways of San Francisco Chinatown, now obliterated forever by fire and earthquake, would ever have taken this for a banking office.

In fact, beyond the big safe there was nothing to suggest to the uninitiated what might be the nature of the business carried on inside.

The furnishing of the banker's office was plain in the extreme.

A counter with a bit of wire railing in front of one end, opposite the safe, a few shelves with cheap vases and

collection of fancy boxes upon them, a desk, and a couple of chairs—this was all.

The Bradys entered, and lining up at the counter faced a young Chink who rose from his seat at the desk to receive them.

"We want to see Lee Phat," said the old detective.

"No can. He go way," was the reply.

"But we must see him. We are detectives—see?"

Old King Brady displayed his shield.

"Detectives?"

"Yes."

"What want?"

"You know Mr. O'Reilly?"

"Yair."

"We come from him."

"So? Wait."

The Chinaman stepped along behind the counter and pulled aside a red curtain which cut off the back room, at the same time calling out some words in Chinese.

Immediately a Chinaman came out from behind the curtain on the Bradys' side of the counter, and announced himself as Lee Phat.

He was a man of medium height, and perhaps forty years old—to tell the age of a Chinaman is no easy matter.

He was dressed in full Chinese costume, with green silk trousers, and a blue blouse.

He wore the pig-tail, and his face was deeply pock-marked, as is the case with many Chinamen on the Pacific coast.

One thing Old King Brady observed, and to his great satisfaction.

Lee Phat's knowledge of English was exceedingly good.

If the Chinese banker had been excited over the loss of his diamonds the day before he certainly showed no signs of it now.

"You come O'Reilly?" he demanded, in the usual unimpressible manner of his race.

"Yes," replied Old King Brady. "It is about the diamonds."

"Yair? You find them?"

"We are trying to find them. O'Reilly has engaged us to do that."

"Allee light. So you no find them then O'Reilly he pay. He good for it, I guess."

"I have no doubt he is, but at the same time we must find the diamonds."

"Well?"

"I wanted to ask you a few questions."

"Allee light. You as-kee so many you likee."

"Did you tell anybody that you were expecting the diamonds?"

"Yair."

"Many people?"

"Tree man."

"Where in San Francisco?"

"Yair."

"Anyone who would be likely to steal them?"

"No. Me tellee me flends."

"Oh, that's all right then. I just wanted to know."

"How they can steal? O'Reilly never leave him offis. He tellee me dlat."

"What time did you get to O'Reilly's office?"

"It was tree o'clock."

"When did you get word that the diamonds were there?"

"Leven o'clock."

"Why didn't you go for them before?"

"Me no could. Me busy."

"I see. Well, that's all."

"Allee light. Come to-moller. Askee more question. Me tellee ebyting me know."

The Bradys left the banker's office then.

"What kind of a bluff were you giving the fellow, Governor?" demanded Harry.

"Oh, I just wanted to see what he looked like," replied Old King Brady.

"You can't make much out of a Chinaman's appearance."

"No; but I saw what I wanted to see."

"Which was?"

"Well, I am not telling now, seeing that you observed nothing."

"I observed that the man was pock-marked, like the cigar peddler O'Reilly told about."

"Ah! So are lots of other Chinks; but now, Harry, we must get down to business."

"I'm ready."

"We have to investigate these five people. You take one and I'll take another."

"All right. Who for mine?"

"Cassie Fine."

"I made sure I'd draw that prize. Do you take old man Murphy?"

"No; we will leave him out for the present, as the least likely one in the bunch to prove the thief. I'll take Tom O'Reilly."

"How about the Chinese cigar peddler?"

"He falls into the same category with Murphy."

"Shall I start right in?"

"I wish you would."

The Bradys accordingly parted on the corner of Dupont and Sacramento streets.

Harry asked for no other orders.

Young King Brady knows his business.

Although he was not even possessed of her address, he anticipated no serious difficulty in getting next to the Winadora girl.

CHAPTER III.

WORKING UP THE CLEWS.

Old King Brady had not been strictly accurate in his statement of his intentions to Harry.

The old detective often takes it into his head to mystify his young partner a bit.

As a matter of fact, it was his intention, not of himself but through another, to take up the matter of the Chinese peddler first of all.

Passing along Dupont street, Old King Brady came at length to a small store which looked for all the world like the office of the Chinese banker when he peered through the window.

It was, however, not a banking office, but the holdout of a notorious Chinese lottery, a place often raided by the police.

Apparently Old King Brady was known here, for the Chinaman behind the counter called him by name.

"Hello, Joe Gong. Is Charley Ching upstairs?" asked the old detective.

"Yair," was the reply. "Me tink he is."

"May I go up?"

"Sure yair. Why not?"

The Chink pulled a handle, and a door opened in what appeared to be a solid partition at the back.

A narrow staircase was thus revealed, up which Old King Brady passed, entering a secret room on the second floor by means of a trap-door.

Here some twenty Chinamen were gathered.

Most of them held slips of yellow paper between their fingers.

These appeared to be on sale by a man who sat behind a table.

There was an arrangement upon another table very much like a roulette wheel.

About the only difference was that no ball was used, the spinning hand and the numbers painted on the board referring to the numbers that were written upon the yellow slips.

Old King Brady looked about the room, which was thick with cigarette smoke.

All eyes were upon him, and immediately a good-looking young Chinaman stepped forward and came up to him with extended hand.

This was Charley Ching, a young Chinese detective whose services are often employed by the Bradys in their Chinese cases, as well as by the San Francisco police.

The Chink greeted Old King Brady with all the earnestness of an old friend.

"Charley, I want your help in a little matter," said Old King Brady. "Can I have it?"

"Sure yes!" was the reply. "What it was?"

"Do you happen to know a Chinaman who peddles cigars in the offices along Kearney street?"

"There are so many."

"Oh, I know; but I have got to find out the name and address of this man. He has a pock-marked face."

"Yair! I know."

"He sure, now. It won't do to make a mistake."

"Oh, I know. His name Dong Gee."

"What kind of a fellow is he?"

"Just a poor cigar maker."

"Where does he live?"

"Don't know dat. Me easy find out, though."

"Do so, and do it to-day. Where can I see you say him about six o'clock?"

"I call at Lick House. I leave word. So I find anything I crooked about Dong Gee I leave word, too, where you can see me."

"That's all right. You are playing here?"

"Yair."

"Ever win anything?"

"Sure. Dis straight game, Blady. No likee policy. You wantee go in?"

"Not to-day. Now, don't forget."

Old King Brady left the lottery room immediately.

He felt absolute confidence in Charley Ching.

He had started the ball rolling on No. 4, and had saved himself a lot of unnecessary routine work.

The old detective now went down on Kearney street, and sought Brannigan's once-famous poolroom.

Here he was also known to one of the managers of the place.

"I'm looking up Tom O'Reilly's record," he said. "I want you to tell me just what you know about the lad."

This question the old detective felt that he could put with perfect security that his confidence would be respected.

As it happened, he had known Mr. Manager in New York, and that individual would have found it very disagreeable, not to say dangerous, to have it made public in San Francisco.

"I know the feller, Brady," he replied. "What's he been doing?"

"Nothing that I know of. It is just that his name has suddenly come into a case on which I am working, and it is necessary for me to find out something about the man."

"Well, he's a dead all around sport. Nephew of old man O'Reilly, the banker, if you know him."

"I know him. Does the old man keep him supplied with money?"

"Indeed, he don't. Tom is almost always broke. Of course, he makes a hit once in a while, but it's some time since I have seen him flush."

"When did you see him last?"

"Oh, he was in here yesterday afternoon, playing the ponies."

"Did you see any signs of his being particularly flush then?"

"Indeed, I did not. He blew in about forty dollars, but everything went against him. He left growling about his bad luck."

"Where does he live, do you know?"

"No, I don't; but I can find out. There's a feller over

in that lunch by the window who is pretty chummy with Tom. Shall I ask?"

"I wish you would."

The report was that Tom O'Reilly had a room on the corner of O'Farrell and Jones street, the number being given.

Old King Brady at once proceeded to the house.

It proved to be a perfect nest of cheap furnished rooms, kept by a Mrs. Mullins.

As there were several to rent, the old detective promptly picked out the one next to Tom O'Reilly.

He had not the least difficulty.

Mrs. Mullins was all talk, and he easily learned that O'Reilly lived in the house, and which room his was.

It was one of the smaller ones, but the room Old King Brady had chosen was one of the most expensive in the house.

Saying that he would send his traps along later, the old detective left, and returned to the Lick House for dinner, hoping to meet Harry there.

He felt that it would be a mere waste of time to attempt to look up Tom O'Reilly until much later in the day.

There were no races on in San Francisco, and there was, of course, no telling where the young man might be.

Such was Old King Brady's start.

Harry's was perhaps more fortunate.

Young King Brady went directly to the Baldwin Theater, and saw the stage manager, whose name he got from a Kearney street costumer.

To this man he introduced himself, and frankly stated his business, without, however, disclosing exactly what he wanted to see the Winadora girl for.

The stage manager seemed to feel quite proud of making the acquaintance of one of the famous Bradys.

"Why, I can introduce you to Cassie if you'll come around this evening," he said. "You'll find her all right. If she can help you out in any way she will be only too glad to do it."

"That's all right; but the fact is I don't want to wait until evening," replied Harry. "Couldn't you give me a line of introduction?"

"I could, certainly," replied the manager, "but you will be pretty apt to find her in bed at this hour of the day."

"Well, I can go a little later; along toward noon."

"That will be better. I will write the note."

Cassie Fine's address was on Broadway street, between Taylor and Powell.

Harry made some inquiries about the place before ringing the bell.

It proved to be a theatrical boarding-house.

"The only way will be to come out flat-footed with the whole business," thought Young King Brady, as he rang the bell.

The Chinaman who answered the ring was a stupid proposition.

He did not seem to know whether Cassie Fine was in or out, but he took the note, leaving Harry to wait in a shabbily furnished parlor.

Returning in a few minutes, he informed him that if he would wait a little while the actress would see him.

The wait was a long one, nearly half an hour.

At last the Chink reappeared, and silently conducted Harry to the front room on the third floor.

This proved to be a sitting-room used in common by the tenants of that floor, and here Harry was received by a young woman in a pink kimono, with her hair done up in curl papers.

Young King Brady went for her flat-footed.

The girl had an honest face, and he saw at a glance that she was a true San Franciscan.

Indeed, as soon as he looked at her Harry was ready to pronounce her innocent off-hand.

"You are Cassie Fine?" he demanded.

"That's me. What do you want?" was the girl's reply.

"I am a detective," said Harry. "I am working for Mr. O'Reilly. Of course, you know that he was robbed of a big lot of diamonds yesterday?"

"Good heavens, no! Is that so?"

"Yes; and the loss will about ruin him."

"You don't tell me. That's a bad job."

"This woman knows nothing," thought Harry. "I have sized her up right."

"It's a bad job for you," he answered. "Of course, you don't want to marry the old boy if he is busted."

"You bet I don't! Tell me all about it. What's your name?"

"Brady."

"Not Old King Brady?"

"Now, come, Miss Fine! Look at me, and tell me if you think I am old anything."

Cassie laughed.

"Of course I'm a fool," she said, "but you see I've read such a lot about Old King Brady. You'll be his partner, I suppose."

"Yes; Young King Brady."

"But why do you come to me?"

"You will understand when I tell you about the case."

"Pitch in. I am engaged to O'Reilly, as you seem to know. He has promised to back me up in a play, that's why I took up with him. There is no earthly show on the stage now unless one can pick up an angel. If he is busted I quit. I told him to his face that I was only going to marry him for his money."

"You were certainly honest with him."

"And why not? The old fellow couldn't expect that I was stuck on his looks. I wouldn't deceive anyone. That's not my style."

"Upon my word, I don't believe it is," laughed Harry, "but hear all about it. Perhaps you can help me find the diamonds, in which case the contract can go through."

"You bet I will help you if I can, Brady. But bust ahead; I'm all ears."

Cassie twisted a stray curl back into its paper, and sat down to listen.

Harry now told the story of the lost diamonds, reporting Banker O'Reilly's statements as accurately as possible.

Cassie listened with close attention.

"Say," she exclaimed, when he had finished, "you came here thinking that I might have them stones."

"That's right," replied Young King Brady, coolly. "Now, then, out with it, Cassie. Have you got them, or have you not?"

CHAPTER IV.

OLD KING BRADY GETS NEXT TO ANOTHER DIAMOND ROBBERY.

"Not!" cried Cassie Fine in response to Harry's question. "Do you believe that?"

"Oh, yes, I believe you."

"If you don't you can search me, you can search my room, you can do any old thing you like."

"Then you must feel pretty sure that I am telling you the truth."

"I do."

Cassie dropped back into her chair with a sigh of relief.

"If you don't you can arrest me," she said, half hysterically. "I want this matter cleared up right now."

This frank talk only confirmed Harry in the opinion he had already formed.

Still there was no telling. He was not through with Cassie Fine yet by any means.

"Don't fret," he said; "I am not here to arrest you. I want you to tell me just what happened yesterday when you were in Mr. O'Reilly's place."

"Which I will, you bet. I went there by appointment and we went to lunch at the Poodle Dog to talk over the new play he is going to help me bring out. You see, I've got a fellow who is writing me a play, Brady. It's a sure winner. All I need is the financial backing and O'Reilly has promised me that."

"Ah, ha! So he went out with you, did he? Now he didn't tell us that. How long was he away from the office?"

"Oh, a couple of hours."

"The old rascal! He left his safe open and the diamonds unguarded for a couple of hours, did he? He deserves to lose them. He spoke of going out to lunch, but he led us to believe that it was just a case of stepping out for a minute to get a bite."

"No; we were gone two hours at least. I went back to the office with him. You see, he would persist in drinking

the Poodle Dog wine. I never touch the stuff myself. He was a little boozy when I got him back."

"Was anybody in the private office then?"

"Yes, old Murphy, the bookkeeper, was in there. I remember particularly. He was buying cigars of a Chink who used to be a servant in a house where I boarded three years ago."

"He was, eh? Was the Chinaman in the back office with him?"

"Yes. He was showing the old man his cigars."

"Very different from the way O'Reilly put it."

"Upon my word, I guess he was too full to remember."

"Do you think this was the same Chinaman he told us he bought cigars from?"

"I have no doubt of it. He bought a box of the man."

"A pock-marked Chinaman?"

"Yes."

"What's his name?"

"Dong Gee."

"Do you know where he hangs out?"

"No, I don't; but I think I can find out for you."

"How?"

"Oh, there is a dope fiend in our company who knows all the ins and outs of Chinatown. We have a rehearsal this afternoon. I shall see him. If you will call around at, say, four o'clock, or, better still, come to the stage door at eleven o'clock this evening. That will give him time to look Dong Gee up, but you don't imagine he stole the diamonds?"

"It is hard to say who did it. Someone did if O'Reilly is to be believed."

"That's it, if he is to be believed," repeated the girl, gravely.

"Do you doubt him, then?"

"Oh, I don't know. He may have sickened of his bargain with me. This may be his way of crawling out of it. I wasn't born yesterday, Brady. I don't believe all I hear."

"Well, I will leave it in your hands," said Harry, and he rose to depart.

"You bet I'll do all I can," replied Cassie. "It's a mighty important matter with me. If O'Reilly isn't going to be able to back me up in my play I want to know it right now."

Harry left her and returned to the Lick House.

He saw Old King Brady in the distance as he came up Montgomery street.

There is never any trouble in identifying the old detective.

This for the reason that Old King Brady, when not in disguise, at all times affects a peculiar dress.

He wears a long blue coat with flat brass buttons, an old-fashioned stock and stand-up collar and a big white felt hat, with an unusually broad brim.

Harry hurried up to him and took his arm.

"Well, Governor, have you found the diamonds yet?" he demanded.

"Not yet; have you?"

"No. Nothing doing yet."

"You saw Cassie Fine?"

"Sure. Had no difficulty at all in getting next to her. She's never the thief."

"Don't you be too sure. I dare say she is good-looking and all that sort of thing. Perhaps I would have done better if I had tackled her myself."

"Perhaps you would, but you might as well hear what I have to say before you say that."

"Fire away, Harry. I was only joking."

Harry detailed his interview.

"Don't think there is anything in her suspicion," said Old King Brady. "I know O'Reilly better than she does. The old man is as close as the bark on a tree. He would never engage our services if this was a put-up job. Besides, he's honest enough."

"He didn't give us his story very straight, just the same."

"Oh, he did not want to admit that he had taken the girl to lunch at the Poodle Dog. But what you have learned is of the highest importance. If old Murphy and this Dong Gee were in the back room together it not only goes to show that there was probably a chance for either one of them to collar the diamonds, but it also shows how horribly inaccurate O'Reilly has been in his statements. It is probably as the girl puts it. The old idiot had drunk too much wine to remember just what occurred."

The Bradys then went in to dinner and the old detective told about engaging the room on Jones street.

"I shall stay there to-night," he said. "In fact, I intend to go over there very soon. As for you, there will be time enough to do a little shadowing of Murphy before you keep your engagement with Cassie Fine."

"Then you think I had better meet the girl as arranged?" Harry asked.

"By all means. There is no telling where we shall strike the real clew."

The Bradys parted about three o'clock, Old King Brady going to his room.

He locked himself in and threw open the window.

Looking out, he perceived that the window in the room adjoining was also open.

If anyone was in the next room there would be no difficulty in hearing them moving about.

Old King Brady listened for a long time, but could hear no sound.

"I think I am safe," he said to himself. "This gives me time to work."

Old King Brady now produced a long slender auger, with which he had provided himself.

With this he bored a hole through the wall and pushed it in until the auger penetrated the plastering of the room beyond.

Old King Brady now produced a tin putty blower such as boys use and carefully inserted it in the hole.

By moving it up and down he was able to determine when the end just penetrated the opening.

Of course there was a chance that some piece of furniture backed up against the wall would defeat his purpose, and there was always the chance of the putty blower being seen.

But Old King Brady was taking these chances.

He had worked this game many times before, and he now lighted a cigar and sat down, prepared for a long wait.

He got it.

Hours passed and there was nothing doing.

At six o'clock the old detective gave it up and went out for a bite.

Returning before seven he found the situation unchanged.

"Upon my word, he might not come at all," he said to himself. "This is getting to be pretty dull work."

But at eight o'clock his patience was at length rewarded.

Heavy uncertain steps were heard on the stairs.

The sounds ceased for the moment before the door of the adjoining room.

"He has come and he is drunk," thought Old King Brady. "It begins to look as if I was going to have my labor for my pains."

After some fumbling at the door the man finally got it open.

Old King Brady could hear him lock the door after him and a moment later fall heavily on the bed.

So far the old detective had been sitting in the dark, but he now lighted the gas and drew up at a table and settled down to read the paper.

"I'll sit up until midnight," he said to himself; "if there is nothing doing by that time I will go to bed."

But he did not have to wait that long.

About nine o'clock a servant came upstairs and knocked loudly on the door of Tom O'Reilly's room.

After several attempts she got an answer.

"Well, what's wanted?" Old King Brady heard the man call out.

"There is a Chinaman downstairs who wants to see you, sir," was the reply.

"Oh, there is, eh? Show him up."

The servant departed.

Old King Brady flew to his putty blower.

He could hear young O'Reilly get up and move about the room.

His step was steady enough now.

"The nap had fixed him," thought Old King Brady. "Who can this Chinaman be?"

Soon the Celestial was knocking on the door.

"Come in, Wing," O'Reilly called.

"So you have come," he added, and Old King Brady heard the door close.

"Yair, I come, Tom," was the next.

"Young," thought Old King Brady. "A sporty, race-going Chink, I'd like to bet."

"Sit down," said O'Reilly. "Make yourself quite at home."

"All right. Say, Tom, you can pay up—yair?"

"But I can't pay up, Wing. I'm dead broke," was the reply.

Old King Brady's ear was glued to the putty blower. He was taking it all in.

"You no can pay?"

"No. Haven't got a blamed cent."

"Dat's too bad. What I do so?"

"Blamed if I know."

"You owe me five hundred dollar now."

"Oh, I know what the amount is well enough."

"Say, Tom!"

"Well?"

"You go gettee money by you uncle."

"No, no. He won't give me any."

"I must be paid."

"Well, you can't get anything out of me, Wing. Give me another hundred and we'll go out and hit the faro bank. If I win you shall have the whole business."

"And so you lose den I lose another hundred—no."

"Well, then, I can't do a thing for you, that's flat."

"Yair, you can."

"What do you mean?"

"Say, Tom."

"Say it."

"S'pose'n I show you where you can make big stake."

"I wish to heaven you would, then."

"S'pose'n I show you where you gettee whole lot diamonds, thousands and thousands of dollars."

"Hello! What in thunder are you giving me now, Wing?"

"Oh, I give it staight."

"Who's got diamonds? How can I get them?"

"S'pose'n me tellee you. S'pose'n we get ketched, den me s'pose you no affraid to killee a man?"

"What? You want me to commit murder?"

"Well?"

"I won't do it."

"Allee light. Me won't do it. Dis man him my uncle. Yair. Me can't killee him, but me show you how to get into him place. De diamonds dey dere. It's up to you."

"Come," thought Old King Brady, "this is a strange turn of affairs. Tom O'Reilly never stole his uncle's diamonds and here is this Chink proposing a diamond robbery with his uncle as the victim. Can it be possible that these are Lee Phat's stolen gems?"

CHAPTER V.

ON THE TRAIL OF MURPHY AND DONG GEE.

Harry, having slightly disguised himself, was on hand on Kearney street shortly after four o'clock.

He took his place in a doorway opposite Leander O'Reilly's banking office.

Of course he had no means of knowing at what time the place closed, but he hardly thought there would be a long wait.

He had found the place and sighted old man Murphy at his desk.

Half an hour passed and then the banker himself came out.

In spite of his loss, Leander looked pretty cheerful.

He was dressed in a new suit of clothes and wore a youthful straw hat with a gay ribbon for a band. He also wore a pink carnation in his buttonhole and carried a light bamboo cane.

"The old masher," thought Harry. "He hasn't given up all thought of Cassie yet. We shall have Murphy out pretty soon now, I suppose."

But he had half an hour to wait.

At last the old man appeared, and having carefully locked the door went shuffling off in the direction of Market street.

Young King Brady trailed on behind him.

"I don't believe there is a thing in this," he said to himself.

Murphy kept on until he came to Post street, where he turned down and pushed on almost to the water front.

Here he turned aside into an alley, and Harry, peering around the corner, saw him enter one of the innumerable little restaurants which before the fire were in this part of the town.

"He is just going for his supper," thought Young King Brady. "There is surely nothing doing here."

He was strongly inclined to give up the chase, when having passed the place and glanced in through the window he saw the old man seated at a little table apparently waiting for his "ham and" or coffee and crullers, or something of the sort.

But there was one thing which puzzled Harry not a little.

The place was kept by a man bearing a Mexican or Spanish name, Morales.

This meant Mexican cooking, which with a man bearing the name of Murphy seemed unlikely to suit.

"I'll follow it up, I guess," Young King Brady said to himself.

His disguise was but a slight one.

He slid into another alley, added a few touches to it and went boldly into the restaurant.

The old bookkeeper was eating a dish of fried eggs, black beans and rice, all jumbled up together in Mexican style.

Harry seated himself at another table and ordered the same of the Greaser who acted as waiter.

Old Murphy merely glanced at him, and went on with his eating.

While his dinner was coming Harry had a good chance to study the man.

He soon perceived that he had not sized him up right at the bank.

The bookkeeper was no ordinary-looking person.

His thin hair had originally been red, but was now nearly white.

His skin was of the color of old parchment and seemed to adhere to the bones of his face.

His clothes were of expensive make and he was padded all over.

Now, as he came to look him over, Harry saw that the man was practically a living skeleton.

He seemed very nervous, too.

His eyelids were constantly twitching and his hands shook so that he could scarcely carry the food to his mouth.

"You queer old codger, you've got a villainous face if ever a man had one," Harry thought. "If you don't use opium you do use some other drug which is playing the deuce with your nerves."

In a few minutes the dish of huevos fritos, with frijoles negros and arroz blanca, as the Mexican medley is called, was brought in by the waiter and placed before Young King Brady.

Harry is very fond of this dish, and being quite ready for supper he started in to eat.

Meanwhile old Murphy was almost through.

"I shall have to make quick work of this. He'll be getting out in a minute," thought Harry.

But just as the bookkeeper pulled his plate aside the man whom Harry took to be Morales himself came in with two cups of black coffee and a bunch of Mexican cigarettes.

He placed the coffee on Murphy's table and sat down opposite to the old man.

They lit cigarettes and began talking.

To Harry's astonishment—for he had expected Spanish—the language was utterly strange to him.

"What can it be?" he asked himself.

It was a queer guttural speech, with many Spanish words sandwiched in, but not enough to give him any idea of the subject of the conversation.

"That is one of the Mexican Indian dialects as sure as fate," thought Young King Brady. "The old lobster is more of a puzzle than I dreamed of."

He took his time with the huevos fritos and all the rest of it.

The coffee drank and the cigarettes smoked up, Morales arose and went into the back room.

Harry had observed one thing about the man.

He was almost as thin as old Murphy, although much younger.

His face also wore the same peculiar appearance.

"They both bit the same drug, whatever it is," thought Young King Brady.

"And," he added to himself, "a drug fiend is almost always a thief wherever you find him. This old duffer may have taken the diamonds, after all."

Morales soon came back carrying a small box made of some brownish wood, which looked a good deal like mahogany.

This he held up to Murphy, saying:

"One will be enough?" in English.

"One will do," replied the bookkeeper.

Morales then wrapped the box in paper and Murphy handed a five dollar bill upon receiving it, getting no change.

A few minutes later he arose and left the restaurant.

He stopped to talk a minute before going out, however, and this gave Harry a chance to gain the alley ahead of him.

Again he trailed after the old man.

Murphy did not seem to have the least suspicion that he was being shadowed.

He strolled up to Front street and passed on to Clay, shuffling along in an aimless fashion.

Here he turned and kept on up to Chinatown, carrying the box under his arm.

He turned down Dupont street and pushed on to Jackson.

Here he went around into the notorious China alley, and shuffling along about half the length of the block on the left, suddenly popped in at a little door and vanished.

"Bowled out," thought Harry. "I expected something of this sort. I can go no further now."

It would have been a little too dangerous to have attempted to follow old Murphy through the door.

China alley at that time was a perfect nest of queer joints.

Here were opium dens by the dozen; underground chambers and passages; strange places which even the police and their detectives never fully learned.

Young King Brady had no desire to be put out of business, and he felt that the case had not reached the stage where he was warranted in taking any such risk.

"I must find out what sort of a joint lies hidden in behind that door," he said to himself. "If I could only find Charley Ching."

Carefully noting the number on the alley, Harry went around on Dupont street and spent quite a time hunting for Charley Ching.

He even went to the lottery office, which he knew as well as his chief, but could get no tidings of the Chinese detective.

Giving it up at last, Harry went to his room in the Lick House and slept until half-past ten.

He expected to be up all night, so he took this opportunity to get a little rest.

At eleven o'clock he was on hand at the stage door of the Baldwin Theatre, asking for Cassie Fine.

"You can go in," said the doorkeeper. "Miss Fine told me to look out for you."

He called a boy, who conducted Harry to what might be

termed a second green room, for there were two in this theatre, and this one was given over to the Winadora girls.

Cassie was seated with several girls around her clothing and laughing.

Standing before them was a solemn-faced young man, who looked as if he might be the "dope fiend."

"How are you, Mr. Brady?" cried Cassie. "You have come just in time, for here is Mr. Wensley waiting for you. He's the gentleman I told you about this morning. Jack, this is Young King Brady, the detective."

Mr. Wensley looked Harry over with languid curiosity.

"Aw, so you are one of the Bradys?" he said. "Let's see, Cassie, what was it again he wanted to know?"

"He has business with a Chinese cigar peddler named Dong Gee. I told him you knew all the Chinese in Chinkville and would help him out."

"Well, not quite, but I do know a lot of them. Don't know that I ever heard of Dong Gee."

"Then you lied to me, for you said you knew him."

Wensley passed his hand over his forehead.

Harry had already sized him up.

He was clearly one of the many white victims of the opium habit who used to hang around Chinatown.

"Did I?" he mumbled. "Aw, well, perhaps I did. Perhaps I thought I knew him then, but I don't remember him now. What did you want of him, Brady?"

"Just to ask him a few questions about a case we are working on," replied Harry, guardedly.

"Any chance of his getting mixed up with the police?"

"Oh, no."

"Come, Jack, come!" cried Cassie. "You can't play fast and loose with me this way. You said you knew the man, and you do know him. He used to do the chambermaid act at Mrs. Barns's boarding-house when we all lived there three years ago."

"Oh, that Chink!" said Wensley. "Yas, I know him."

A peculiar look came over his face which Young King Brady did not fail to observe.

"He knows him perfectly well, but he will never take me to him, I am afraid," he thought.

Wensley was looking at him under half-closed eye-lids, in a peculiar way.

"Yas," he drawled in a minute, "I know Dong Gee, as you call him, but he don't call himself that now. Well, ladies, if you will excuse me I'll be off. Come along, Brady. I'll see what I can do."

Harry bade Cassie Fine good-night and thanked her, then following young Wensley to the street.

"You are one of the company?" he asked by way of starting up a conversation.

"Yas. I'm down on the bills as Signor Paletti."

"Oh, yes. You are the male dancer of the company?"

"Sure. You have seen me on the stage, I suppose?"

"Yes. I saw you in New York two years ago. You're an artist in your profession, all right."

"Well, I ought to be. I spent time enough learning how to dance. Let's come in here to the Occidental cafe and have a drink. I never go into the Baldwin cafe. Apt to meet too many friends."

"I'll smoke a cigar with you. I'm on the water-wagon just now," was Harry's reply.

They lined up at the bar, where Wensley punished a gin-rickey.

He talked incessantly, after the style of dope-fiends, and as a matter of course his talk was all about himself.

Harry tried to get him down to business, but it was hard work.

At last they left the place and started for Chinatown.

"I'll put you next to Dong Gee if I can, Brady," said Wensley at last, "but you must give me your solemn promise that you won't arrest him."

"I have no such intention," said Harry.

This was true enough, for the time being.

Young King Brady now found himself not a little puzzled to know just how to proceed.

What he really wanted was the cigar peddler's address.

To meet him in Wensley's company scarcely suited his purpose.

To ask the man any questions about the diamonds would, of course, be mere folly.

Harry wondered if Cassie Fine had told Wensley anything about the missing gems.

They walked on, Young King Brady cudgeling his brains to know what to do.

From Dupont street they turned into Jackson and from Jackson into China Alley.

Still Harry was not prepared for what was going to happen.

There were so many dope joints on the Alley.

It came as a genuine surprise to him when Wensley halted at the very door behind which old man Murphy had disappeared.

"You wait here," he said. "If Dong Gee is inside, as I have reason to believe, I'll send him out to you. Don't you try to follow me in here now. If you do it will be as much as your life is worth."

Thus saying the dope fiend vanished through the door.

CHAPTER VI.

THE TEMPTER AND THE TEMPTED.

Old King Brady heard Tom O'Reilly get up and begin pacing the floor.

He knew that it must be Tom, for such a thing a stolid Celestial would never do.

"You crowd me hard, Wing," the young spendthrift's voice was heard saying at last.

"It's up to you," repeated the Chinaman. "It must be as you say."

"Can this thing be safely done?"

"You mean the police?"

"Yes."

"Sure, it not so den I not put it up to you, Tom."

"Who is the man—your uncle, I mean? What's his name?"

"Name! What good names. Good ting to forget when one tink of such business. You comee with me. Dlat's all. I show you how to do de job—yair."

"But what can we do with the body? It will be found. Then we shall be in the soup."

"No."

"Why do you say that?"

"Listen, Tom. Me Highbinder. Me belong to lodge. Plenty of Chinks disappear in Chinatown. Yair. Evly little while you read on Chinese bulletin so and so he disappear. Dlat never get into you papers—no. Chinamen all know, but they no tell. Why? Too danglous—see? Whoever tell he mebbe be next. Yair. Highbinders have a way of fixee all dlat. Body goes down hole—see? Blimeby it get cut up and packed in box. Dlat box getee dlopped in de bay. Nebber nobody hears nloting about it. Me plot ddis plot long time. Lesterday me uncle he getee whole lot of dliamonds. You askee me where he getee dlem den me no can tell, but he show dlem to me—yair. I know he have dlem. Me fixee tings to get him money. Mebbe we get dlat too—some—he put most him money in bank—see? Dliamonds dley better. Say, you go in on ddis—yair?"

Wing How was growing excited, and his English grew worse and worse as his excitement increased.

Old King Brady had all he could do to follow him.

More and more convinced he was becoming that this plot concerned the diamonds of the Dupont street banker.

One word from Wing How would have settled it, but the plotter, with the caution of his race, forebore from mentioning names.

"This is great talk," said Tom O'Reilly, after a short silence. "I never expected to fall so low as to listen to such talk from a Chink."

"Oh, well. Stlange tings dley happen—sometime, yair. Might be worse. We getee dlose diamonds we go New York and play de horses dere—so? Me an' you. Mebbe we make big luck."

"How much do you suppose the value of the diamonds is?"

"Oh, we no can tell. Hull lot. Mebbe hunded an' fifty thousand dollar."

"So much?"

"Sure, yair."

"Great Scott!"

"Sure great Scott. Ddis big ting."

"Well, where do I come in?"

"Half, Tom; me cross off what you owe me, too."

"Wing, I don't know what to say to you."

"Dlat mean you will do so dere no risk of de p'lice."

"When do you want the job done?"

"Now; to-night."

"So soon?"

"The sooner the better. You go with me now, Tom? Me show you. So you want to back out in de end den so you can."

"All right!" cried O'Reilly, desperately. "I'll go. I've simply got to have money or jump this town."

"Good! Comee on!"

Old King Brady pulled out his putty-blower.

The conflict between the tempter and the tempted was ended, and the tempter had won.

Noiselessly the old detective let himself out of the room, and stole downstairs.

His scheme had succeeded in a way he had little dreamed of.

He encountered no one, and was able to gain the street unobserved.

Taking his stand on the opposite corner, Old King Brady waited.

In a few moments Tom O'Reilly and his Chinaman came out of the house.

Old King Brady was so stationed that there was little chance of being observed, and he now proceeded to follow them at a distance.

He had been able to get a good view of young O'Reilly's face.

"He'll do," he said to himself. "That fellow is dead to all moral sense."

He trailed after them, and as he expected the trail took him to Chinatown.

But, instead of Dupont street the detective saw the last of his pair of would-be murderers on Sacramento street, just around the corner from Banker Lee Phat's.

Here they entered a side door alongside of a Chinese store, and left Old King Brady guessing what he ought to do next.

"If I only had Charley Ching?" he thought.

He had heard nothing from the Chinese detective.

For once this shrewd Chink had failed him.

"I've got to get in there somehow," thought Old King Brady, "and under the circumstances I don't know but what the best way will be to take the bull by the horns."

He had walked on to Dupont street, and he concluded to take one look at Lee Phat's bank before making the attempt.

The place proved to be closed.

There were no shutters to the store window.

A bright light burned in the bank, in modern style.

The red curtain of the back room was tightly drawn, and Old King Brady could not make out that any light burned behind it at the hasty glance he gave.

"May be in there, and may be not," he thought. "Well, I'll make a try for it, hit or miss."

He went back around the corner on to Sacramento street, and walked slowly past the store.

This gave him a chance to observe the key-hole of the side-door.

"Just an ordinary old-fashioned lock," he said to himself.

Wing How had used a key to let himself in, and had no doubt locked the door behind him.

"If he has also bolted it I'm done for," thought Old King Brady, "but we shall soon see."

He drew out the bunch of skeleton keys which he always carries, and standing by a lighted window with his back to the crowd of shuffling Celestials which here used to be a continuous procession night and day, he hastily ran them over, and selecting one which he felt would be most likely to best serve his purpose, removed it from the bunch.

He then strolled on to Kearney street, turned, and retraced his steps.

So far as he could see no one was observing him.

In a moment he had regained the door.

Old King Brady turned and, boldly thrusting the key into the lock, gave it a quick turn.

The lock instantly yielded.

Opening the door, Old King Brady slipped in, closing it behind him.

Now for a moment he stood listening.

If he had been observed and someone was going to follow him in, he wanted to know it before locking the door.

There was nothing doing in that line.

Cautiously locking the door, Old King Brady produced his electric dark lantern, and flashed it about.

This was necessary, much as he regretted it, for he stood in black darkness now.

Here was a narrow flight of stairs leading to the rooms overhead.

At the end of the hall in which he stood was a closed door.

Here were two ways out of the place, and it did not take Old King Brady long to decide which to choose.

"They went upstairs, of course," he said to himself. "If there is a Highbinders' lodgeroom here it is not likely that it is in back of the store."

He tip-toed upstairs.

Certainly this was no Chinese tenement. There was no sign of life. There were two doors here, and a ladder leading to a scuttle in the roof.

The building was an old one, and only two stories high.

Old King Brady tried both doors, to find them locked.

"One is as good as the other," he said to himself.

Out came the skeleton keys again, and in a moment he had opened the rear door.

He pushed it back cautiously with his revolver in his hand, cocked and ready.

There was no need.

The place was dark and silent.

Flashing his lantern about, Old King Brady saw that it was indeed some sort of a meeting-room.

There were many chairs ranged against the wall, and scrolls bearing Chinese mottoes hung about on every hand.

Old King Brady did not trouble himself to lock the door this time. It was well enough to leave a chance to escape.

He had already made the discovery that those who preceded him here had done the same thing.

A secret panel in the wall stood open.

The detective hurried toward it, and discovered behind a narrow staircase leading down.

He had come upon the entrance to one of the many underground dens in Chinatown.

CHAPTER VII.

PRISONERS IN THE UNDERGROUND DEN.

Harry had a long wait outside the China Alley door.

Which being the case, we propose to continue with Old King Brady for the following chapter, as the events which occurred to the old detective took place a little before Wensley left Harry at the door.

Old King Brady listened at the head of the secret stairs, and as he could hear no sound he started to descend.

He groped his way, not daring to use the electric dark lantern.

Soon he reached the bottom of the flight, and now it became absolutely necessary to bring out the lantern.

Old King Brady concluded that he must be somewhat below the street level.

The place was boarded up, and a narrow passage extended off on a line with Dupont street.

One flash of the lantern showed the way clear, so he pocketed the thing again, and crept forward.

He estimated that he must have passed about the distance between the corner of Sacramento and Dupont street and Lee Phat's store, when the passage came to an abrupt end.

Old King Brady, who had been walking with his hands stretched out before him, found his fingers up against a partition.

Again he produced his dark lantern.

A cross passage was revealed, heading directly toward Dupont street.

All doubt that Lee Phat was the uncle of Wing How now vanished.

"But what can it mean?" Old King Brady asked him-

self. "Did my Chinese banker hire someone to steal the diamonds, or are these other stones?"

It was not easy to determine.

Again shutting off the lantern, the old detective hurried forward.

He had not gone far before the passage took a slight turn.

Once he had made this the old detective caught sight of the faint glimmer of a lantern ahead of him.

"I am close on their track," he thought.

He hurried on, walking with cat-like tread.

Suddenly the light vanished, and a door slammed ahead of him.

Old King Brady whipped out his own lantern, and pressed on.

He knew that he must be almost to Dupont street now, and there could no longer be a doubt that the passage had its end directly under one of the stores on that strange thoroughfare.

Reaching the door, he tried it, and finding it unfastened, cautiously opened it.

The light shone ahead, and the old detective could see Tom O'Reilly standing at the foot of a ladder, leaning against the wall, holding a lantern.

The Chinaman was nowhere to be seen.

"I'll arrest that young man, and now is my time," thought the old detective.

He cautiously closed the door, and stole forward, revolver in hand.

He had covered about half the distance when suddenly two revolver shots rang out somewhere off in the distance.

"Heavens! The Chink has done the killing after all," thought the old detective.

O'Reilly gave a sharp exclamation, and flashed the light up the ladder.

Instantly he turned, and ran along the passage toward Old King Brady.

The old detective promptly covered him.

"Halt there!" he cried. "You are under arrest!"

O'Reilly gave a startled exclamation.

"For heaven sake, whoever you are, get me out of this!" he gasped. "The Chinks are coming. They will murder us both."

"Pass me! And don't you dare to turn!" ordered Old King Brady. "Be quick!"

O'Reilly ran ahead.

Old King Brady pressed close behind him, and they reached the door almost at the same instant.

Something snapped.

O'Reilly clutched at the latch.

"They've locked us in!" he gasped. "In heaven's name what are we to do?"

Old King Brady looked back.

He could see a yellow face peering down the ladder.

There was a clucking laugh, and at the same instant the floor sank beneath their feet.

It just tipped up, and dropped the detective and young O'Reilly down into the darkness.

Their fall was of no great depth.

Old King Brady lost his footing, however, and went down with O'Reilly on top of him.

Instantly the turning floor turned back into place, and they found themselves in darkness, struggling to regain their feet.

In the struggle the revolver was in some way discharged.

O'Reilly gave a yell of terror.

Old King Brady thought then that he had killed his man.

"Don't shoot me! Don't shoot me!" cried the young gambler, wild with fear.

"Hush!" said Old King Brady. "If you are not shot already you are in luck. The revolver went off by accident. Were you hit?"

"No."

"Get up, off of me, then. Where's that lantern of yours?"

"It went out."

"I know very well it went out, but do you have it still?"

"Yes; it is here in my hand."

O'Reilly had regained his feet now.

"Give it to me, or light it yourself," said the old detective scrambling up.

O'Reilly scratched a match and lighted the lantern.

"We are done for," he gasped. "Whoever you are I guess now you wish you hadn't butted in."

The place was a sort of vault, with stone walls—a strange thing for San Francisco, where stone is so difficult to obtain.

On one side was a rude flight of steps leading up to a trap door, on the other was a bamboo couch shrouded by a curtain.

Chinese scrolls hung against the wall, and there was an opium layout upon a bamboo stool near the couch.

"I hear no one coming," said O'Reilly, who was trembling from head to foot.

"They will come soon enough. We want to see if there is a way out by those steps."

Old King Brady ran up the steps and tried the trap door at the top.

It was as firm as a rock.

"Nothing doing," groaned Tom. "Oh, this is a pretty mess."

"Quite so," replied Old King Brady. "But at all events this has saved you from committing murder and robbery, young man."

"Wha—what do you mean?"

"I simply mean that your plot to murder Wing How's uncle and steal his diamonds is known to me."

Tom groaned.

"I see I am in for it in more senses than one," he said. "But who are you?"

"My name is Brady. I am a detective," and there was a display of the shield.

"Old King Brady, the detective?"

"Exactly."

"I—I have heard of you."

"Through your uncle, I daresay."

"What do you mean? Do you know me?"

"Oh, yes; very well, Mr. Tom O'Reilly. You are the nephew of Leander O'Reilly, the banker."

Tom groaned.

"I'm up against trouble, all right," he growled, "but you are in a very bad box yourself, if I can read this case straight."

"No doubt of it; under the circumstances it is not going to pay us to quarrel. Who was shot up there—not your friend Wing How, I take it, or this would not have happened."

"You know Wing How?"

"Yes, and all your plotting and scheming is known to me."

"Bad luck!"

"Answer my question. Who was shot?"

"Don't know. I'm afraid it was Wing How. Afraid? No, I'm not afraid. I don't care if he is or not. I'm glad after all the thing didn't come off."

"You would never have been able to muster up courage to kill the Chink with the diamonds."

"Mr. Brady, how on earth did you learn all this business? Was it a plot of Wing How's to trap me? Were you told in advance?"

"Never mind how I learned it. Wing How had nothing to do with sending me the information, however. But now, before we are interrupted, do you know who this man was whom you were to kill?"

"I give you my word that I do not."

"Did you ever hear of Lee Phat, the Chinese banker on Dupont street?"

"Sure."

"Well?"

"Is he the man?"

"I so believe. Do you happen to know that your uncle had these diamonds imported for Lee Phat?"

"I know nothing about my uncle's business."

"He never stole the diamonds," thought Old King Brady.

The way in which Tom said it was to him ample proof. Here was a singular situation.

Old King Brady sat down upon the edge of the couch and tried to think.

Tom O'Reilly nervously paced the floor.

"We shall never get out of this," he groaned. "This place is a regular trap where the highbinders kill their victims and cut 'em up afterwards. I know."

"So do I!" replied Old King Brady, lighting a cigar. "Very likely such will be our fate. I don't know and you don't know what may happen next."

"It is dreadful!"

"So much for playing the ponies and bucking the tiger, drinking too much, smoking cigarettes, and all that sort of thing."

"You seem to have been looking up my record all right, old man."

"A child could read it in your face."

"Am I then such an idiot?"

"And getting in debt to Chinese race-track gamblers like Wing How."

"Oh, this is too much! You must be either a mind-reader or a magician."

"To the tune of \$500."

"Come! When you name amounts that shows that someone must have talked. It was Wing How!"

"It was not Wing How. I never spoke with the Chink in my life. Now, listen; I've been employed by your uncle to recover the diamonds which were stolen from his safe."

A noise at the trap-door cut the conversation short.

There was a rattle of bolts, and in a minute a revolver was poked through the partially raised door.

"So you shootee so me shootee!" a Chinese voice called.

"Come on! Come on!" replied Old King Brady. "There need be no shootee. Come down here and tell us what you are going to do!"

The trap door was fully raised then.

Two Chinamen, each carrying a revolver, descended.

They kept their weapons cocked, and covered the two prisoners.

They were followed by a stout Chinaman, richly dressed and heavily pock-marked.

It was Lee Phat, the banker.

"So, Mlister Ole Kling Blady, I see you again!" he said. "You findee dlose dliamonds? Yair? No?"

"Lee Phat," said the old detective, "do you know that you are making a fool of yourself by making a prisoner of me?"

"No makee fool. You big fool comee in dhis place. For why you do it? You one of dlose who would killee me? So! Dere one"—he pointed to Tom—"anoder he dead: you two be dead in a minute. You no can fool with me. So you mind you own business you better would do."

Old King Brady looked the fellow over critically.

"He's a bad one," he thought. "Upon my word, I believe this man is capable of any crime."

"You say noting?" cried the banker. "Very well. Now trow down your revolvers, both of you, or I say shootee, an' you be dead!"

Old King Brady tossed a revolver on the floor.

He had another in a secret pocket which he felt very certain that the Chinamen, even if they searched him, would not be able to find.

Tom O'Reilly declared that he had no revolver.

Lee Phat ordered both to stand up against the wall with their hands above their heads.

Then he searched them with considerable care.

But Old King Brady's hidden weapon was not discovered, nor was anything found upon Tom O'Reilly.

"Now, you standee still till we go way," said the Chinese banker. "Then you stay here till me comee back again."

He retreated up the steps.

The two Chinks backed up after him, each keeping the prisoners covered until the last moment.

The trap-door dropped back into place.

"Great Scott!" groaned Tom O'Reilly, "what is going to be the end of all this?"

"Blest if I know," replied Old King Brady, striking a match and lighting his cigar afresh. "We shall have to wait and see."

CHAPTER VIII.

HARRY JOINS FORCES WITH CHARLEY CHING.

Young King Brady waited so long in China Alley that everybody got to looking at him, and he grew nervous enough.

At last, however, the door opened and Wensley came out.

He had evidently been dosing with the drug he used, whatever its nature was.

His dull eyes shone bright, and there was color in his sallow cheeks.

He spoke in a quick, nervous way, very different from his previous manner.

"Hello, Brady. So you are still here," he said. "Excuse me keeping you waiting. Dong Gee isn't in there."

"That's too bad."

"Sorry. Can't be helped, though."

"You have no idea where I can find him?"

"Not the least."

"What kind of a place is it in there?"

"Just a hop joint. Do you ever hit the pipe?"

"No."

"It's a kind of a high-toned joint. Private club, don't you know; run by rich Chinks and a few professional people; only for that I'd be glad to take you in."

"Oh, I don't care to go in. Much obliged for your trouble."

"Sorry I can't help you out. So-long."

Wensley popped in through the door and disappeared.

Harry turned away, deeply disappointed.

"Everything seems to be on the hog with me to-night," he muttered. "What in the world am I to do?"

He started for Jackson street, but before he had advanced ten steps along the alley a Chinaman in full native costume, with his pig-tail down, darted out of a doorway and placed himself in his path.

"What am I up against now?" thought Harry.

He tried to pass the man, who did not speak.

But the fellow stepped in front of him, and when Harry side-stepped again it was just the same.

"Come, get out of my way. What are you blocking the road for?" demanded Young King Brady, angrily.

"Hello, Harry! Don't you know me?"

"Charley Ching!"

"Sure!"

"Never saw you in that costume before, Charley, but, by Jove, I'm glad to see you in any shape."

"All Chinks look alike to you," chuckled the half-breed.

"What's up?"

"Come with me, and I'll tell you. I've been watching you for the last half hour. I've got a room upstairs here now."

"All right. Lead the way."

Charley passed in at a door just below the one where old man Murphy and Wensley had vanished, and led the way up a dark staircase to the top of the house.

Here he admitted Harry into a little box of a room, comfortably enough furnished.

The walls were hung over with various costumes of a Chinese order.

There were a few wigs—Charley usually wore his hair short.

These articles were the detective's stock in trade.

"Sit down, Harry," he said; and then, with true Chinese hospitality, he started in to make tea.

Knowing that Charley Ching would neither say nor do anything until this ceremony was disposed of, Young King Brady waited patiently.

It was a point gained, at all events, to have met this really remarkable young man, to whom the mysteries of Chinatown were an open book.

As Charlie sipped his tea he began to talk.

"I promised Old King Brady to look up a Chink named Dong Gee, a cigar peddler," he said. "I was to report early in the afternoon, but I couldn't. I've placed him now, all right, though."

"Yes? That's what we want."

"What's the case, Harry? The boss did not tell me."

Harry reflected a minute, and then concluded to tell the whole story, which he did.

"Huh!" said Charlie. "Better look out! Lee Phat is one of the biggest scoundrels in Chinatown."

"Lee Phat is?"

"Yes, he is. He is the banker for the Highbinders. They say there is an underground connection between his Dupont street store and the Highbinders' lodge on Sacramento street. He is a dangerous man."

"Do you think he would steal the diamonds himself?"

"He would if he could, you bet. He would no more hesitate to commit murder than any other Highbinder, either. Of course, I know nothing about this business, but I'll tell you one thing, I've seen Dong Gee, and he looks

enough like Lee Phat to be his brother. Both are about the same age, and both are pock-marked. If Lee Phat took it into his head to fix himself up and go peddling cigars I don't believe old Leander O'Reilly could ever tell the difference."

"By gracious, Charley, you open my eyes!" Harry exclaimed.

"Yes," said the Chinese detective, "it could be done. O'Reilly is an old back number, anyhow, and half a fool. But, as I said before, I don't know anything about this business. The boss asked me to find Dong Gee, and I've found him—that's all. Hold on, though! Perhaps you know. You were waiting outside the place where he is at the present time."

"The hop joint behind that door?"

"It is no hop joint, Harry. It is worse than that."

"How worse?"

"That's where the Loco Club hang out."

"And what is the Loco Club, then? A club of madmen? Loco means crazy in Spanish."

"That's just what they all are when they get their peculiar dope into them, and don't you forget it. They smoke a Mexican weed; not the true loco weed, which makes men and horses mad down there in the cactus country, but another, which is ten times worse than opium, some say, while others tell me that a man can go on smoking it for years and not feel any bad effects. I'm sure I don't know."

A flood of light now broke upon Young King Brady.

Now he could understand old Murphy's visit to the Greaser restaurant keeper. It was all perfectly plain.

Murphy hit this loco weed. So, of course, did Wensley, the dancer, and Morales, the restaurant keeper.

"Does Dong Gee hit the stuff as well?" Harry asked.

"That's what he does, so I am told," replied Charley. "I know for sure that Lee Phat does. I once saw him in the Loco Club."

"How came these Chinamen to get into using it?"

"Pshaw, Brady! Don't you know that a Chink will smoke anything which will bring the dope drunk on to him. They don't care what it is so long as the drunk comes. But in this case there is a reason. It seems that there was a bunch of Chinks and white men who used to be connected with a mine down in Sonora, Mexico, who got to using this loco dope. The mine busted, and they came up to San Francisco and soon afterward the Loco Club was started here. That's the story. Well, I looked in on them this evening after I got the tip that Dong Gee was a member, and I saw him there. Now, what are you going to do?"

All this conversation on the part of Charley Ching was in English, almost as good as we have expressed it here.

Fortunate for Harry was it that he had found such an ally.

Just how fortunate it was for Old King Brady will be seen later on.

"I want to talk to Dong Gee and see if he really was in Leander O'Reilly's place selling cigars yesterday," said Harry. "The whole case seems to turn on that."

"Well, so it does. I can fix it so that we can get in there, but whether we find Dong Gee in shape to talk on any subject is quite another question. Want to go?"

"Sure."

"It's a risk. If they find out that we are detectives we are done for. The police have an inkling of the existence of this Loco Club, and they are hunting high and low for it. It hasn't suited my purpose to tell them where it is, so I've kept my mouth shut. If the Locos get onto us I don't believe they would hesitate an instant about killing us."

"I'll go, of course. You know very well that the Bradys never hesitate on account of danger."

"Sure. You must go as a Chink if you are going with me."

"Well, I've made up that way before, and I guess I can do it again. You seem to have the goods for the job right here."

"I have, and they are at your service. Pitch in."

Harry lost no time in making his disguise, to which Charley Ching gave the finishing touch by applying a wash to his face and hands which gave the skin a true Chinese tinge.

They then locked up the room, and Harry was starting along the alley toward the door of the Loco Club when Charley caught him by the arm and pulled him back.

"Not that way," he said. "I get in on the side. Only the members of the club could pass in through that door."

They went around on to Dupont street, and here Charley popped in at a doorway alongside one of the large Chinese restaurants.

"This way for the Loco Club," he whispered, "and if we are lucky enough to catch these new-fangled dope fiends at their dance you will see a strange sight."

CHAPTER IX.

OLD KING BRADY COMES UP WITH THE DUPONT STREET DIAMONDS AT LAST.

Old King Brady is never the man to sit down in the hour of trouble and bemoan his lot.

He is, on the contrary, a worker at all times, and his most active efforts are apt to be put forward when the time of trouble comes.

"Well, young man, they have left us," said the old detective, "now is the time to see what we can do toward making our escape."

"If we can't get through that trap-door then I don't see what chance we have," replied Tom, dismally.

"We have a dozen different chances."

"I fail to see where they are."

"And I don't propose to waste time in setting them before you. Here's one, however. Perhaps we can go out by the way we came in."

"We can't get up there, for one thing."

"Wrong. See that bolt under the trap which dropped to let us down?"

"Yes; but it is up out of our reach."

"It is close against the wall. If you can get on my shoulders you can easily reach it."

"By jove, that's so. I can do that all right."

"And if you can shoot the bolt to get out will be an easy job for you."

"And you?"

"Oh, I shall be able to manage it, too, if you don't desert me."

"I'll not go back on you, Mr. Brady."

"See that you don't. I may be able to put in a good word for you with your uncle, which I understand you stand sadly in need of."

"That's what I do."

"We will make the try."

Old King Brady now fumbled in his secret pockets, and produced a small hook with screw attached.

Next came a lot of strong twine, which upon being shaken out proved to be a veritable rope ladder about thirty feet in length.

This the old detective looped up in such a way that it would just about reach up to the trap.

"Now get on my shoulders, shoot the bolt, pull down the trap, and screw this hook into it, finally making the rope fast to the hook," he said.

"All right," replied Tom. "I am ready. And am I to climb out into the passage when I am through?"

"Yes, if you can. The rest of the arrangement is to enable me to get up."

"All right. I understand."

"Go on, now," said Old King Brady. "Catch me by the shoulders; put your right foot on my hip-bone, and don't be afraid of hurting me. I am used to this sort of thing."

Tom lost no time in obeying after Old King Brady had placed himself face against the wall. In a moment he was on the old detective's shoulders.

He had room enough and to spare.

Indeed, he could not stand upright.

In a moment he had shot the bolt, and the trap-door dropped.

"Good!" breathed the old detective. "Now, get in the rest of your work as quickly as you can, for I want you to understand you are no light weight."

Tom worked rapidly.

In a few moments he had the ladder in place.

"Climb out," ordered the old detective.

Tom pulled himself up into the passage.

Old King Brady lost not a second in following him.

He unscrewed the hook, pulled up the cord ladder, and having restored these things to his secret pockets, was ready for business.

"Now to get out," he whispered. "I don't suppose you want to investigate into the fate of your friend Wing How?"

"No, no! Let us get right along."

"Yes; if we can. They seem to have locked this door since I passed through it, however."

Old King Brady now tried his skeleton keys, Tom O'Reilly holding the lantern.

He readily found a key which would turn the lock.

But the door seemed to be fastened in some other way, and he could not budge it.

"This is a bad job," he growled. "I did not count on this."

"It blocks our game, all right. What are we going to do now?"

"There is only thing to do, and that is to try our luck at the other end."

"Which will bring us up again Lee Phat. Come, I don't like that."

"A man is apt to run up against a lot of things he don't like when he starts out to do murder."

"That's right. Throw that in my face!"

"Well, don't you deserve it?"

"Perhaps I do; but there is no use talking about it now."

"We will cut it out. I am going to start now."

"And I shall have to follow, of course."

"Come, then, let us be going. Put out that lantern of yours. We will use mine, which is better suited for the purpose."

Flashing his dark lantern upon the ladder ahead of them, Old King Brady quickly covered the intervening space.

As he passed along he did not fail to observe a door on their left.

Reaching the ladder, he boldly ascended, but the trap-door at the top was firmly secured.

"Can't you open it?" called Tom.

"No; it is as firm as a rock."

"Then we are no better off than we were in that dope room."

"So it seems; but we still have the other door. Did Wing How by any chance tell you where it leads to?"

"No."

"We must find out, then. It may spell a way of escape."

"That's so. Do we get back?"

"Yes," replied Old King Brady, and they returned to the door.

There was no trouble in opening it, as Old King Brady had anticipated, for the bolts were on their side.

It communicated with a small room hung all over with white cloth, completely concealing the walls except at two

points, one where their door entered, and the other leaving space for another door on the Dupont street side.

Old King Brady instantly tried this door.

It was not fastened, and as he opened it the sound of Chinese music fell upon their ears.

Someone was playing a dismal tune upon a moon banjo, accompanied by cymbals and some sort of flute.

"They are coming this way along a passage," breathed Old King Brady. "We want to get out of here."

They slipped back into their own passage, and bolted the door.

Quick as lightning Old King Brady whipped out a small auger and bored a hole in the panels.

They could hear the music now, even with the doors shut.

But it seemed to advance very slowly.

Old King Brady bored a hole in the other panel.

"We can see what is going on in there now," he whispered. "It will be serious business, I have no doubt?"

"What do you mean?"

"You noticed that the room was hung with white?"

"Yes."

"That is the Chinese mourning color."

"Is it?"

"Yes."

"Are they going to kill somebody, then?"

"Remember this is a Highbinders' den."

"Gee! I am not likely to forget it after what has happened."

"Hush! Here they come!"

They put their eyes to the peep-holes, and saw the inner door open.

An ugly looking Chinaman with a terrible scar on his cheek entered, playing the moon banjo.

Behind him came another, raising a fearful din with a pair of cymbals.

Following this man was a third, making horrible discord on a Chinese flute.

"If this is a funeral dirge then it is enough to make the dead rise up and walk," thought the old detective.

Clearly it was nothing else.

Following these three musicians came Lee Phat and another Chinaman, carrying between them the body of Tom O'Reilly's tempter, Wing How.

The Chinese gambler was clearly dead, and the blood on his clothes extended down from a bullet wound just over the heart, as was evidenced from the singed condition of his coat.

The music now ceased, and there was a lot of talk.

The body, meanwhile, had been deposited in the middle of the floor.

At length the musicians picked up their instruments, and ranging themselves along the wall, began blowing and banging away.

The Chinese banker and the fifth man stepped back, and stood in the doorway.

It was not difficult to imagine what was coming.

Clearly this was the pit of which the dead man had spoken in his long conversation with Tom O'Reilly.

Lee Phat now thrust his hand in behind the hangings and pulled something.

Instantly the floor close up to the narrow space where the musicians stood turned up on end, and the corpse vanished like a flash.

Lee Phat now restored the floor to its place, and all retreated, the fifth man—who, although we neglected to mention it, carried a lantern hung around his neck—closing the door behind them.

"Great Scott!" gasped Tom. "That's the end of Wing How."

"And your \$500 indebtedness is canceled," added Old King Brady. "Lucky man that it wasn't you."

"I wonder why they didn't do us up off-hand!"

"Oh, who can fathom the motives of a Chinaman? Very likely they held us in reserve for a worse fate."

"It is terrible!"

"It is the old story. Wing How started out to murder his uncle, and the banker turned the tables on him. But how came he to go up the ladder first that time, when it was arranged that you should do the job?"

"He wanted to see how the case stood."

"The ladder led into Lee Phat's room?"

"Into a secret room behind it."

"The wily old Chink must have caught him spying."

"Heavens and earth! I wish I was out of this!"

"Our situation isn't a very cheerful one, I must admit."

"They'll get us in the end, sure."

"But as they have not got us yet there is no use worrying about it. I propose to follow those fellows up and see where they went."

Tom shuddered.

"You are sure the Chink was dead, Mr. Brady?" he asked.

"Oh, yes, he was dead. His face showed that plainly enough."

Old King Brady now opened the door, and cautiously tried the floor with his foot.

"It seems firm enough," he said.

He walked boldly upon it, and it did not yield.

Throwing open the other door, he looked along the passage.

It led in the direction of Dupont street, and was boarded up on all sides.

"However do the Chinamen make these secret passages?" he remarked.

This is a question which has never been solved.

After the earthquake and fire many such secret passages and underground rooms were revealed in San Francisco's Chinese quarter.

Old King Brady now advanced boldly, and soon came upon a ladder leading upward similar to the one seen in the other passage.

At the top was a trap-door, and upon trying it the old detective found that it was unfastened.

"Here we go, O'Reilly," he whispered, and he cautiously raised the trap and turned it over.

"It's a case of must, I suppose," growled Tom. "I make no doubt that it will end in our death."

"Quit your growling and come on," said Old King Brady.

He stepped out into a small unfurnished room.

Here a bright light shone through a round hole in the partition, about the size of a dollar.

Old King Brady tip-toed to this opening, and peered through.

Beyond was a sizable room, furnished in the Chinese style.

At a table sat the Chinese banker, bending over a rich display of gems.

Old King Brady had come up with his Dupont street diamonds at last.

CHAPTER X.

HARRY SEES THE LOCO DANCE, AND SOLVES THE MYSTERY OF THE DUPONT STREET DIAMONDS.

Charley Ching led Harry through the passage almost to its end, where he paused and knocked three times on a door.

It was immediately opened, and a thin, withered-faced Chinaman looked out.

As for the conversation which followed, Harry could make nothing of it, as it was held in Chinese.

The man seemed very reluctant to admit them.

Charlie Ching at last slipped a ten-dollar gold-piece into his hand, and he held the door back.

This was in accordance with Young King Brady's instructions.

He had told his guide to spare no expense.

They passed downstairs into a dismal cellar, which was lighted by a hanging lamp.

Here their guide left them, passing through a low door set in the partition.

"We have got so far," whispered Charley. "This is the way they go out. The rule of the Loco Club is that no member shall leave by the door by which they go in off the alley."

"Will he let us into the club-room?"

"No, no! He can't do that. There are private rooms here, though, where these dope fiends sleep off their drunks. He will let us into one of those, if he can. There are peep-holes. We can see all that goes on."

"But how did you see Dong Gee?"

"Oh, he was in one of the private rooms. I persuaded that Chuck to let me in where he was."

"Oh, I see. Don't stint the money. If any more is needed I will stand for it."

"That's all right."

"Perhaps I had better give you some now?"

"No: I've got enough. Hush! Here he comes."

The door opened, and the Chinaman appeared.

He beckoned to his visitors, and they passed through into a narrow passage.

Following this a few steps the Chinaman opened a door, and ushered them into a darkened room.

Here he left them, after whispering a few words to Charley Ching in Chinese.

Charley carefully shot the bolt behind the man.

"Now, look here, Harry," he whispered. "We are in one of the most secret dens of Chinatown, and if we are in luck we may see one of its most peculiar sights, and that is the famous loco dance."

"I thought you knew more of this place than you let on," replied Young King Brady. "You have been here many a time."

"Not so many; but I've been here before to-day, all right. You see, I wasn't sure that I could work the raffle, and a fellow don't want to tell all he knows. But it's all right now. We are on the inside track."

Harry waited for Charley to make his next move, for he knew that it was no use trying to hurry him.

Confused sounds could be heard beyond the partition.

Charley crept up to it, and fumbling about, pulled back a sort of false door.

Now light came streaming through half a dozen peep-holes.

Charley motioned Harry to look, at the same time pressing his finger to his lips.

Peering through one of the holes, Young King Brady found himself looking through into a large room, magnificently furnished in Oriental style.

There were heavy curtains hung about the walls on all sides but the one on which they stood.

The room was divided into little stalls by curtains hung on wires.

Each of these private compartments were provided with soft cushions thrown down upon the floor.

Many were occupied by men dressed in loose white robes gathered in at the waist by a heavy twisted cord, and reaching from head to foot.

As all were clothed alike, it was difficult to tell one from another.

In some of the compartments there were two persons, in others only one.

Some lay sprawled out asleep, others were smoking short bamboo pipes which bore little resemblance to the opium pipes of the Chinese.

In each stall was a low table, upon which were matches and a glass containing something which resembled loose, fire-out tobacco.

This Harry saw must be the "loco" weed, for several were filling pipes with it.

There was no pungent odor as from opium.

What little smell the stuff had was rather an agreeable one.

Most of the smokers puffed away in silence, but a few were talking with each other in low tones.

A young Chinaboy, also in white, was running up and down with a silver tray, bringing drinks and looking after the wants of the patrons of this odd dope joint.

Harry ran his eye over the faces.

He was soon able to pick out the old bookkeeper, Murphy.

The old man had evidently had his smoke, for he was sound asleep.

Young Wensley, however, was still smoking in his compartment, where there was another with him.

For fully ten minutes the detectives continued to watch in silence, and then Charley came over to Harry, caught him by the arm, and drew him into one corner of the room.

"Now you have seen the Loco Club in full swing," he whispered. "Were you able to pick out Dong Gee?"

"I take him to be the peck-marked Chink in the third stall from the upper end of the room."

"That's right."

"How can we get at him?"

"It can't be done here. The only way is to wait and follow him out."

"That might take all night?"

"It might; but this sort of dope don't last like opium. They will all be on the move between one and two o'clock. What I want is for you to see their dance, if they are going to have it to-night. They don't always. I saw it once, and it is well worth seeing. Shall we hold on awhile?"

"I'm for holding on till Dong Gee gets out. I must see that man."

"We'll wait a bit, and see what comes. But somehow I don't believe that Dong Gee is your man, Harry. He is a stupid fellow, they tell me. From what I hear of him I don't believe he is up to stealing those diamonds."

Harry said nothing.

He had told Charlie as little as possible, and had made no allusion to old man Murphy.

Now he was beginning to suspect that the old bookkeeper might be the thief.

One thing was certain, of all four who were under suspicion Murphy had had the best opportunity to steal the gems.

They now returned to the peep-holes, and remained watching for some time.

Nothing special transpired.

It was even duller than watching the hop fiends in an ordinary opium joint.

But at last there came a change.

Suddenly one of the smokers gave a yell and sprang to his feet.

Darting out upon the floor in front of the stalls he began a mad dance.

He was a young man, and Harry saw that his face had the same sallow look which he had observed in the case of Wensley, old Murphy, and the restaurant keeper.

He leaped from the floor, snapping his fingers, turning and twisting his whole body in the most remarkable fashion.

All conversation ceased now.

The smokers sat up and watched the dancer with eager interest.

Suddenly another sprang up and took to the floor.

He went through the same tactics, but every time he sprang into the air he gave a wild cry.

A minute later and a Chinaman was up and dancing, too.

"Now we are going to get it," breathed Charley. "You will see."

This madness was evidently catching.

Strains of Chinese music were heard.

In a minute a full Chinese orchestra was blowing and banging away.

This settled it.

One after another sprang up and joined in the mad dance.

All at once a strong blue light was thrown upon the dancers from some unseen source.

More joined.

The sleepers awakened, the stalls were deserted.

The members of the Loco Club now looked like so many blue demons.

Each seemed trying to jump higher than the other; to indulge in wilder gestures and more peculiar postures.

They shouted, yelled, and screamed.

It was pandemonium let loose.

Now suddenly the blue light was changed to red.

The effect was even more peculiar.

Perhaps being in the red ray had something to do with it.

At all events, the mad dance grew madder still.

They leaped, whirled, cavorted, threw up their arms with strange gestures, twisted, twirled, and turned.

Now, after a minute, a yellow light was thrown.

This seemed to have a quieting effect.

The dance proceeded more slowly.

A green light followed.

Instantly all joined hands, and the wildest movement of all followed.

It was while this was in progress that Harry suddenly caught the sound of voices speaking close to them, as it seemed.

He touched Charley, who at once closed the door over the peep-hole.

"Someone in the next room," he breathed.

"They are talking Chinese," whispered Harry.

"Yes; and they are talking about diamonds on Dorset street."

"Say, is that so?"

"Yes, yes! We must catch on to this."

"How can we?"

"Leave it to me."

Charley Ching must have used this room for the purpose of spying before.

Going over into one corner, he threw himself flat, and close down to the floor opened a little panel set in the wall.

This panel only extended half-way through the partition, but the wall on the other side was pierced with a hole.

Motioning to Harry to come down on the floor and join him, the shrewd little Chinaman pressed his ear to the opening.

Young King Brady did the same.

He might as well have saved himself the trouble.

The talk was all in Chinese, and he could make nothing of it.

He got up and, dropping into a chair, waited.

For a long time Charley lay motionless, listening at the panel.

At last he closed it, and getting up came over to Harry.

The voices had ceased.

Evidently the Chinamen in the next room had got on the move.

Inwardly Harry chafed at finding himself at the mercy of his companion.

But it is always so in these Chinese cases.

"Well?" he demanded. "What does it all amount to?"

"It amounts to a lot. We must get out of here at once."

"And why?"

"Old King Brady has been captured by the Highbinders."

"What! What!"

"Oh, that's right. Lee Phat has got a lot of diamonds in his place, and those two fellows who were talking in there intend to murder him to-night, and will steal the stones."

"Can they be Leander O'Reilly's diamonds? He is the man they were taken from."

"That's just what they are," replied Charley, coolly. "Lee Phat stole them himself. He fixed up like Dong and swiped the stones out of O'Reilly's safe to save paying duty and commission on the stones, which the old man had advanced. He also intends to wring as much of the value of the gems out of O'Reilly as he can."

"Well, well, well! And you heard all that?"

"Yes, I did; and a whole lot more. We have to get busy. Harry, if we don't Old King Brady is a goner sure."

CHAPTER XI.

OLD KING BRADY FALLS INTO BAD HANDS.

Old King Brady, peering through the peep-hole into the private living-room of the Chinese banker, needed no one to tell him that Lee Phat himself had stolen the diamonds from Banker O'Reilly's safe, and that these were the gems.

Old King Brady had suspected this from the first.

There they were, and the Chinaman was alone with his plunder.

It looked as if things were at last coming Old King Brady's way.

"If I was only rid of this fool behind me," thought the old detective.

Turning, he motioned to Tom to retreat.

He followed him to the end of the passage, and in whispers told what he had seen.

"I don't believe that secret door leading in here is so secured that I can't open it," he whispered, "but if I rush that Chink will you stand with me, young man?"

"Sure, I will," said Tom. "I'd like to see my uncle get the diamonds back. As for the Chinks, I've had enough of them to-night to last me the balance of my life. All I want is to get out of this."

"Stand close behind me, then, and we'll make the try."

Old King Brady returned to the peep-hole.

Lee Phat had a little scales on the table now.

He was weighing the gems, picking them up with a pair of tweezers, and putting them on the scales.

Having carefully noted the weights, he entered them in a tissue-paper book, at the same time working his abacus counting machine, and putting down the result—probably intended for the value of the stone—in his book after the weight of the gem.

Old King Brady drew his dark lantern.

He was not afraid of the light being seen—the Chinaman's light was too bright inside.

In a moment he sighted the secret spring which controlled the door, or rather panel.

Putting up his lantern, he drew his revolver, and laid his hand upon the spring.

"Now!" he whispered.

He shot the spring, jerked open the door, and jumped into the room.

The Chinese banker must have heard him.

Quick as the old detective's movement had been, Lee Phat had been quicker.

The scales lay on the floor, the diamonds had vanished. The Chinaman stood back to the bunk, with one hand flung behind him and under the mattress.

He was fumbling for a revolver.

But Old King Brady had headed this off just in time.

Thrusting his own weapon in the Chinaman's face he sternly ordered him to throw up his hands.

Lee Phat obeyed in sullen silence.

At a time like this a Chinaman very rarely utters a sound.

But his black, beady eyes were firmly fixed on Old King Brady, and the detective knew that one slip might cost him his life.

"Feel under that mattress—get his revolver," he said to Tom.

Young Reilly had it in an instant.

"Feel in the left-hand tail pocket of my coat: you will find cord there. Tie his hands when he puts them down," came next.

Tom found the twine, and Lee Phat put his hands down without being told.

He knew that he simply had to.

No Chinaman ever quarrels with the inevitable.

They simply lie low and watch their chance.

Tom tied the banker's hands, and Old King Brady then forcing Lee Phat to sit down, tied him to the chair.

"We have got him now," he said.

Tom heaved a sigh of relief.

"It's all right as far as it goes, but where are the diamonds?" he demanded.

"Don't know. He has disposed of them somewhere. We'll get next. Lee Phat, what did you do with those stones?"

"Me no tellee you."

The words came hissing.

There was a look of fiendish malignity on the Chinaman's face.

"All right. We'll see what can be done to find them," said Old King Brady. "But first we must open up a way of escape. Tom, see if the front door is locked. If so, unfasten it. We don't want to be caught in a trap by Highbinders if any should happen to come in by the secret passage."

Tom opened the door, and passed into the bank.

Old King Brady had not failed to observe the young man's nervousness.

From the very first he had been in a perpetual tremble.

Tom left the door open, went to the front, and began fumbling with the fastenings of the street door.

"Call a policeman if you happen to see one passing," said Old King Brady. "If you don't, then come back in here."

Tom made no answer.

Just what happened Old King Brady fully anticipated, and felt satisfied that it was so.

Tom, having got the door open, quietly slid out, and pulling it shut after him took to his heels.

Not even the possibility of getting the diamonds away from Old King Brady in case he found them was sufficient to induce him to remain another minute.

"He's gone, as I thought he would," muttered Old

King Brady. "Very well. I will get the diamonds and go, too."

Still keeping his revolver in his hand, he pulled open the table drawer, looked under the mattress, and searched for the gems as best he could.

Lee Phat watched him, but said never a word.

At last Old King Brady halted in his search.

He found that he was up against a more difficult proposition than he had supposed.

He could not believe that the Chinaman had the diamonds on him.

There had not been time for him to gather them up and put them in his pocket.

They had evidently been swept into some place of concealment, as the fact of the scales having been tumbled over on the floor proved.

Still, the man would have to be searched.

Old King Brady determined to take him to the police station and end the business there unless he gave up the gems, and he said as much to the banker.

"Belly well," replied Lee Phat. "Me do what you say. You gettee best of me, yair."

"Look here, Lee Phat, did you steal those diamonds from O'Reilly?" demanded the detective.

"No."

"How did you get them, then?"

"Nebber mind."

"They are the same diamonds which O'Reilly lost?"

"Nebber mind. I givee dlein up, yair."

"Do it, then. Where are they?"

"Under floor, by table."

"So? A secret hiding place?"

"Yair. Strike you foot hard by dlat leg of table and you open door."

Old King Brady tried it.

A little panel in the floor shot back.

It revealed an opening about two feet square, and quite as deep.

It was lined with galvanized iron, and there, sure enough, lay the diamonds scattered about.

Clearly Lee Phat had opened this new secret panel and swept the diamonds into it from off the table.

There was also a wash-leather bag lying among the stones; in this, no doubt, the Chinaman had had the diamonds packed away.

Old King Brady kneeled down, got the bag, and began picking up the diamonds.

He never dreamed of Lee Phat making trouble, so careful had he been in securing him to his chair.

But this was just where he missed it.

Suddenly the Chinese banker, with a mighty effort, threw himself forward, chair and all.

He tipped over, and came down with tremendous force directly on top of Old King Brady.

This sent the old detective sprawling.

One of the chair legs struck him on the back of the head.

It was a stunning blow.
For the moment Old King Brady lost consciousness.
It could not have been long before his senses return-

But there had been time enough to change the situation completely.

Lee Phat, still tied to his chair, lay at a little distance.

Three Chinamen of the commoner sort stood by the table, chattering like magpies.

The secret panel was closed, and the diamonds were where to be seen.

"What has happened now?" thought Old King Brady. Whatever it is, it will be my policy to hold my tongue and play a waiting game."

He closed his eyes, but kept one corner open.

The three Chinaman continued their talk.

Lee Phat chimed in.

He seemed to be earnestly begging the intruders to release him, Old King Brady thought.

And this at length they did, but before beginning to untie him one drew a revolver and covered the bank-

Released at last, Lee Phat staggered to his feet.

The two men instantly began searching him.

The wily Phat made no protest.

"Evidently these fellows are just thieves," Old King Brady said to himself.

But if this was true—it was true, as Harry was afterwards able to prove—they did not get the diamonds.

They took a small bag of gold away from the banker, and also a sizable roll of bills.

More talk followed.

To Old King Brady it all meant nothing, but he felt sure the thieves were demanding the diamonds.

At last they gave it up, and tying Lee Phat hand and foot, tumbled him into the bunk.

"If I only had my revolver," sighed the old detective.

But it had been left on the table, and it was impossible to say which of the Chinks had it now.

Having disposed of Lee Phat, the thieves turned their attention to Old King Brady.

They evidently knew that he was taking everything in, for the man with the revolver kept close to him.

Suddenly the two pounced upon the old detective, and tied him to his feet.

It was useless to play possum any longer, and equally useless under the circumstances to put up a fight.

"You detective," said one of the thieves, looking Old King Brady over. "Why you come here?"

"Ask Lee Phat," replied Old King Brady, who could see nothing to be gained by telling these men where the diamonds were.

"Lee Phat one big liar," was the answer. "You come here gettee diamonds? Yair? No?"

"Ask Lee Phat."

The banker from the bunk gave Old King Brady an approving nod.

"You gettee diamond?"

"No. I got no diamonds. John, if your head is level you had better let me go."

The Chinaman fumbled under his blouse and took out a handkerchief.

Instantly there was a strong smell of chloroform.

Old King Brady was ready to fight for his life now.

He did not get the chance.

The Chink with the revolver thrust the weapon in his face.

The other sprang forward, caught him by the throat, and mouth, and Old King Brady, in spite of his struggles,

The next instant the handkerchief was clapped over nose and mouth, and Old King Brady, in spite of his struggles, was soon dead to the world.

CHAPTER XII.

CONCLUSION.

Charley Ching hurried Harry out on to Dupont street by the way they had come into the Loco Club.

"If we are only ahead of those fellows," he said. "But I have my doubts."

They stood in a doorway and waited.

Soon others began to come out.

The session of the Loco Club was evidently over for the night.

But no Chinamen appeared.

Wensley now came out.

He walked with his head down and his eyes fixed on the pavement.

His face, like that of all the others, was deathly pale. He seemed like a man in a dream.

Next came old man Murphy.

He was in much the same condition, but he staggered a little, which none of the others had done.

"How does it affect them afterward?" Harry asked Charley Ching.

"Don't know," was the reply. "I wouldn't hit the stuff for a million dollars. They say it kills them in five years, but they never get stupid with it as they do with the hop. They are always wanting to yell and to dance. But say, Harry, I guess this is the time we get left."

Dong Gee came out now.

"Shall we follow him?" questioned Harry.

"Don't believe he was one of them. Still, if you say so——"

"I'm leaving everything to you to-night, Charley. But remember you didn't actually see these men."

"There is where you are right. I not only did not see them, but I don't know who they are. We are left as far

as shadowing them is concerned. They got out ahead of us, sure."

"I am inclined to think so. Never mind. I heard enough. If you will trust yourself to me!"

"Of course. That's what I am out for to-night."

"Come on, then. We will go around on Sacramento street and see if we can't get into the Highbinders' lodge-room. If there is anything doing that will surely be the place."

They walked away, passing Lee Phat's place in a minute.

Charley softly tried the door.

"Locked," he said. "But there is a light in the back room. I only wish I could see what is going on in there."

"Tell me what you heard, Charley. Remember. I don't know that yet."

"All right. Those fellows seemed to be in with Lee Phat. They were Highbinders, all right. They knew he had stolen the diamonds. He had told them all that, and they had helped him make way with a race-track Chink who goes by the name of Wing How. Then they captured Old King Brady and another white man in the secret passages under the Highbinders' lodge. Lee Phat had arranged with them to come back and kill them. That's about the size of what I heard."

"Do you mean they had already killed this Wing How?"

"Sure!"

Charley spoke as though the killing of a Chinaman by Highbinders was an every-day affair.

"And you say they said that Lee Phat had personated Dong Gee, and that he stole the diamonds from O'Reilly's safe while pretending to sell cigars to old man Murphy?"

"That is what they said."

"Where did they get their information? Did you hear?"

"From Lee Phat himself. They said Dong Gee knew nothing about the business. They spoke of him as a dope fiend and a fool. That is why I didn't see any use in following him up."

By this time they had turned the corner of Sacramento street, and Charley halted before the entrance to the Highbinders' lodge.

"By jove, this is queer business," said Young King Brady. "But if the Governor is really a prisoner inside there we must go for him. Don't we want the police?"

"Don't ask me to go with you then. For me to be breaking in with the police at my heels would queer my business forever. It is something I just won't do."

"Right," said Harry. "I won't ask it. Who is more, I know Old King Brady had much rather that the police should not be dragged into the case."

Charley tried the door.

"Locked," he said. "Unless you can help me I am done."

"You have no skeleton keys?"

"Not with me."

"I have my bunch. We will make the try."

Harry had the door open in a minute.

They glided into the dark hall, and closed the door behind them.

"We go slow now," whispered Charley. "I want you to understand that there is no place in all Chinatown as dangerous as this."

* * * * *

Old King Brady came to his senses in the secret opium room.

But it was only in part.

A strange weakness seemed to have seized him.

He could not move a muscle, not even lift his hand.

When he opened his eyes they immediately closed again.

He lay there half dead.

Later the old detective felt satisfied that in addition to the chloroform he must have been suffering then from some drug administered to him by the Highbinders, and probably it was so.

Time seemed to have no meaning for him.

His brain was all in a whirl, until at last he dropped asleep.

The next thing he knew he was wakened up by some noise above.

He opened his eyes, and saw the trap-door at the top of the ladder raised, and Lee Phat come sneaking cautiously down.

The banker looked over at the couch where Old King Brady lay, but did not pay any special attention to him at first.

The old detective's eyes were half closed, and he appeared to be asleep.

Lee Phat was breathing hard, and his whole frame seemed to be in a tremble.

Old King Brady languidly watched him.

His own strength was rapidly returning, but his head was not yet clear.

Lee Phat had evidently got free, for he now came over to the bunk and looked down at him.

"You awake?" he asked.

"Yes," mumbled Old King Brady. "Did they let you go?"

"Yair. Dley no could find diamonds, so dley go away. You good man you no tellee 'bout dlat hole in floor, which I shutee up."

"I am not telling things for other people's benefit. Who were those fellows? Just thieves?"

"Yair. Highbinders. Highbinders all thieves. Dley go away, but dley comee ter-moller. Mo go now. Me jump town."

"So?"

"Yah."

"Say?"

"Well?"

"Free me."

"You belly sharp man, Blady. So you helpee me I no like you like I mean to do—see?"

"All right. I don't want to be killed."

"I leave flap-door open. You go away. You no can helpee me. I no flaid. If you tellee dlem fellers you see diamonds dlen dley killee me. You no tellee dlem so you save my life. So I leave flap-door open, and when you see better you lun away—see?"

"All right. Much obliged."

"You go Leander O'Leilly, you tellee him he big fool. He gettee diamonds. Me makee myself allee same cigar peddler Dong Gee—see? Dlat de way me do it. Here diamonds. Me gettee some mune me hide here, dlen me go."

Thus saying, Lee Phat pulled the bag which Old King Brady had seen out of his coat pocket, and shook it, chuching all the while.

"This Chink is half-doped, too. He has been hitting the pipe. Ten to one those fellows left him just to give him the chance to get the diamonds. I'd like to bet they are laying for him somewhere here."

The old detective's head was clearing now as he lay there watching Lee Phat.

The banker went over into one corner and, stooping down, pulled up another of his little trap-doors.

Old King Brady saw him take out great bundles of bank bills, which he stuffed into his pockets.

Evidently the Chinese banker was one of the kind who did not believe much in safes.

He was literally stuffed with money by the time he got rough.

"Now I go," he exclaimed, turning to the couch. "You be glad some day I no killee you, Blady. Dlat's what I meant to do—so long."

"Am I good for him?" thought the old detective. "But must be! This will be my last chance. Heaven knows where Harry is to-night, and——"

He was just on the point of springing to his feet and striking the Chinaman when the other trap-door dropped.

Down dropped the three Chinese thieves from the passage above.

It was just as Old King Brady had reasoned it all out.

The old Chinks had simply withdrawn after setting Lee Phat free to give him the chance to get the diamonds and the hidden wealth.

As one man they now set upon the astonished banker, and a fearful struggle began.

"This ends my chance," thought the old detective.

He closed his eyes and lay perfectly still.

"Were you ever in here before, Charley?" questioned

Young King Brady, as he and the Chinese detective found themselves standing together in the dark passage which led to the Highbinders' lodgeroom.

"Once," replied Charley. "I managed to get in among the Highbinders in disguise. They never knew it, and I saved a man's life by doing it. I ran a fearful risk, though."

"Then you know the way to the lodgeroom?"

"Yes; but that don't say that I am going to be able to pilot you through the secret passages, which everyone in Chinkville knows exist here. I expect I shall have to trust you for that."

"I'll do the best I can, but we must have a light, no matter how great the danger is."

Young King Brady now produced his dark-lantern, and Charley piloted him to the lodgeroom.

"Now the question is to find the secret passages," he said. "Of course, there is a hidden door here somewhere. It is up to you."

Harry went to work in the usual way of the Bradys after taking one hasty survey of the room.

Thus he examined each wall in turn with the greatest possible care, and after a little came upon the secret door.

Charley was jubilant.

"I wonder if they are ahead of us here?" he exclaimed. "We have lost so much time that I feel almost afraid that we shall be too late altogether."

"Don't even suggest it," replied Harry. "This is a case where we simply must succeed."

Stealthily they descended to the passage below.

Young King Brady had now reduced his dark-lantern to the merest glimmer, and even this he took the precaution to shade with his hat.

As they neared the door leading into the long passage through to Dupont street, they caught the sound of voices behind it.

Instantly Young King Brady "dowsed the glim."

"Somebody there?" he whispered.

"Sure," said Charley. "Wait. I will see what's doing, or, rather, hear, if I can."

He crept up to the door and dropped flat.

Thus he listened for a long time at the threshold.

Harry began to wonder if he would ever return.

At last he heard him coming.

In the darkness nothing could now be seen.

"Well?" breathed Young King Brady.

"I heard a lot, Harry."

"Who is it?"

"Same fellers."

"Good! Then they have not done up the Governor yet?"

"No; he is in a secret vault badly doped. They mean to kill him, though."

"Is the vault alongside here?"

"It is deeper down. There is a way of getting in from Lee Phat's, and also one from this passage, right alongside of where we are."

"You have improved your time all right. What are they hanging back for?"

"Waiting for Lee Phat."

"Do they expect him to come and bring them the diamonds, then?"

"No, no! It seems that they had a fight in the bank. They tied up Lee Phat and tried every way to make him tell where the diamonds were, but he wouldn't; so they set him free and pretended to go away. But instead they halted there in the passage."

"For what?"

"They think they have so scared him that he will jump the town with his diamonds."

"What's the matter with him going out by his front door, then?"

"Because they feel sure he has got money hidden in the secret opium vault where Old King Brady is now a prisoner."

"Oh, Lsee. Won't they be coming this way?"

"No; there is a trap-door right where they are standing; they intend to drop down on Lee Phat just at the right time."

"We must find that other door, Charley."

"That's what we must; but how to do it without a light is more than I can tell."

"Let me try. Which side is it on, do you know?"

"On the left hand side as we stand. That is what they said. It is about half-way between the door ahead of us, and the one we came through."

"Then if that is straight it ought not to be so difficult. Here goes for a try."

Harry groped with his hands along the partition.

The conversation which we have recorded was in the lowest of whispers, and these operations were made with the greatest precaution.

And success came Young King Brady's way.

The door, fortunately was in no way secret.

In a minute his hand struck an ordinary latch.

He raised it, and the two passed into a small room, where there was a trap-door in the middle of the floor.

Light streamed up through the cracks, and voices could be indistinctly heard below.

"By jove, this is the place!" breathed Young King Brady. "I shed my Chinese disguise here, Charley. I am going to play the white detective now."

He was but a minute in making the change, but before he had completed it there came a crash below, followed by loud cries.

Young King Brady shot the bolts and pulled up the trap.

Harry, peering down, saw Old King Brady lying unconscious in the bunk. It seemed that the old detective must be dead.

There was a hot time on among the Chinks.

In the struggle one drew the bag from the banker's pocket.

But Old King Brady's unconsciousness was all assumed.

He saw Harry as he looked down the steps.

He saw him pull his revolver and dash down into the vault, followed by Charley Ching, similarly armed.

That was the time Old King Brady came to life again in a hurry.

He sprang up and felled one of the thieves with a well-directed blow.

Harry and Charley Ching quickly did for the others.

Lee Phat fled up the stairs.

"This fellow has the Dupont street diamonds!" cried Old King Brady. "We collar them and skin out."

He had the bag in a moment.

The next and they were out of the vault.

Quickly they made their way out to the street via the Highbinders' lodgeroom.

The game was over—the case was finished; once more the Bradys had won out!

* * * * *

As for the rest of the odd narrative, we need only add that Leander O'Reilly was rejoiced next day to have his diamonds duly delivered to him, and the Bradys received a liberal reward.

The detectives made no attempt to follow the matter up with arrests.

They seldom do in their Chinese cases.

Later they learned that Leander O'Reilly made a compromise with the Chinese banker, and delivered the diamonds over to him less every expense, including the reward.

Long before this the banker married Cassie Fine, who left him within a year.

The old bookkeeper got the bounce.

What became of Tom O'Reilly they never learned.

Of course, Charley Ching received his share of the reward, and having mentioned this we have spoken our last word as to the case of The Bradys and the Chinese Banker.

THE END.

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